

**‘Before and After Science’: Esoteric Traces in the Formation of
Psychoanalysis**

John Boyle

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Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies
University of Essex**

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ABSTRACT

The originality of this thesis lies in the evidence it adduces for the presence of esoteric ‘traces’ in psychoanalysis, which it conceptualises under the rubric of an ‘Orphic trajectory’ active within psychoanalysis. It proposes that these ‘traces’ were ‘encrypted’ in psychoanalytic metapsychology under the guise of ‘theory.’ The origins of this trans-generationally transmitted ‘trauma’ is attributed to Sigmund Freud’s ambivalence concerning the ‘occult’ in psychoanalysis enacted in the form of an ‘Orphic fragmentation’ that contributed to the dissolution of his relations with C.G. Jung and Sándor Ferenczi. In order to facilitate an analysis of the materials, some preliminary methodological considerations concerning discourse analysis, spectrality, ‘trace,’ ‘enigmatic signification’ and ‘encryption’ are discussed. A brief introduction to the academic study of the Western esoteric ‘traditions’ is also provided. Three formative esoteric ‘precursors’ to psychoanalysis are foregrounded—Jacob Boehme, F.W.J. Schelling and G.W.F. Hegel, whose respective speculations concerning the significance of ‘esoteric somnambulism’ as a medium for accessing the ‘Nightside’ of German Romantic psychology are then discussed. The genealogical diremption that exemplified relations between ‘magnetic gnosis’ and a ‘disenchanted’ hypnotic trance is then illustrated and its ensuing effects upon psychoanalytic theory discussed. After reviewing the contributions made by psychical research and Kabbalistic hermeneutics in the development of Freudian psychoanalysis, the thesis considers the role played by the Hungarian School in the development of an ‘Orphic trajectory’ in psychoanalysis as exemplified in the writings of Sándor Ferenczi, Elizabeth Severn and Nandor Fodor. It subsequently considers the respective roles of ‘mystical gnosis,’ ‘esoteric technē,’ the Kabbalah and theurgy in the writings of W.R. Bion. By way of conclusion, James Grotstein’s *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream? A Study of Psychic presences* is

proposed as an exemplary illustration of the persistence—and importance—of the ‘Orphic trajectory’ in the formation of post-Bionian psychoanalysis.

CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.1. General introduction

No culture is able to achieve the integral fullness of the real, nor can any develop all the potentialities of the human being, for the latter is always in excess of itself ... Each culture explores certain sectors of the real, privileges and develops certain dimensions of experience, and, because of this fact, sacrifices other dimensions, other possibilities, which return to haunt it ... against which the culture protects itself through a number of mechanisms.

Bertrand Méheust, *Le Défi du magnetisme*¹

Suzanne Kirschner has observed that ‘modern theories of human development are heir to much older spiritual and cultural structures and themes’.² This imbrication of earlier currents and traditions with more recent theories of mind and personhood can be traced back for millennia and across cultures.³ From the Enlightenment through to post-modernity and beyond, commentators such as Jason Josephson-Storm have remarked on the extent to which ‘scientific and magical worlds were often intertwined’.⁴ This superimposition of paradigms is inscribed into the fabric of our language, as can be seen, for example, in terms such as *psychical*, in which we find the rubric of *psyche* aligned to ideas of the physical, the occult,

¹ Cited in Jeffrey Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: the Paranormal and the Sacred* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 199.

² Suzanne R. Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis: Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

³ See Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Fontana, 1994 [1970]); Paul S. MacDonald, *History of the Concept of Mind: The Heterodox and Occult Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

⁴ Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 43.

fantasy and the mind.⁵ One of the more recent manifestations of this entanglement of ‘scientific’ with ‘magical’ and ‘religious’ modes of discourse can be observed in the cultural and conceptual matrix conjoining psychoanalysis to *fin de siècle* ‘occultism,’ including psychical research, telepathy, alternations in consciousness and the Jewish Kabbalah.⁶ Consequently, the perception that psychoanalysis constitutes an essentially ‘secular’ and ‘materialistic’ endeavour is one that requires substantial revision in the light of the contributions made by Judaic, Christian, occult, esoteric and Kabbalistic sources to its creation.⁷ Moreover, ideas concerning ‘secularity’ and ‘materialism’ have been problematised and reformulated in the light of evolving conceptualisations of secularity as a derivation of religious modalities of thought, in tandem with the ‘new materialist’ reconstitution of the ‘body’ as something that can be both ‘physical’ and yet ‘non-material,’ in a manner that is intriguingly reminiscent of the idea of the ‘subtle body’ encountered in esoteric discourse.⁸ While an interest in telepathic and paranormal processes in psychoanalysis has recurrently featured as a liminal theme in the clinical literature, this thesis constitutes the first concerted attempt to integrate the findings from these studies into the wider historiographic, conceptual

⁵ See Stephen Frosh, *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 167; Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Secret Body: Erotic and Esoteric Currents in the History of religions* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 248-249.

⁶ See Frosh, *Hauntings*; Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy: 1870-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); John Boyle, ‘Esoteric traces in contemporary psychoanalysis,’ *American Imago* 73:1 (2016), pp. 95-119; Joseph H. Berke & Stanley Schneider, *Centers of Power: The Convergence of Psychoanalysis and Kabbalah* (Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson, 2008). See also Kocku von Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion: An Historical Study of Discursive Change* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015) for a more general account of these processes viewed from a discourse analytic perspective.

⁷ See Paul C. Vitz, *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious* (New York: Guilford Press, 1988); Carolyn Burdett, ‘Modernity, the occult and psychoanalysis,’ in: L. Markus & A. Mukherjee (eds.) *A Concise Companion to Psychoanalysis, Literature and Culture* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 49-65; Joseph H. Berke, *The Hidden Freud: His Hassidic Roots* (London: Karnac, 2015)

⁸ See Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Jay Johnson, ‘The Body in Occult Thought,’ in: Christopher Partridge (ed.) *The Occult World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 659-671; Catherine Keller & Mary-Jane Rubenstein (eds.) *Entangled Worlds: Religion, Science and the New Materialism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Jon Mills, ‘A Critique of Materialism,’ in: Jon Mills (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and the Mind-Body Problem* (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 14-45. In the estimation of Mills, ‘the whole reductionist enterprise’ constitutes ‘an ideological artefact that is scientifically indefensible,’ *ibid.*, p. 29.

and reflexive framework provided by developments in the academic study of Western esotericism.⁹ It argues that, despite its purportedly materialist credentials, Freudian psychoanalysis is permeated by esoteric ‘traces’ that remain active within the *corpus* of its theory and practice. The persistence of these traces within contemporary psychoanalysis is attributed to their original *encryption* through a process of *preservative repression* mediated via an occluded ‘esoteric matrix’ active within Freudian psychoanalysis since its inception.¹⁰

It is generally acknowledged that ‘For Freud, psychoanalysis is a natural science’.¹¹

However, for many of its revisionists, critics and detractors, its collective disciplinary efforts to chart the depths of the unconscious seemed—at times—to constitute something closer to ‘the dream of a science’—or perhaps even a ‘pseudoscience’.¹² As William James (1842-1910) has remarked:

⁹ Rabeyron et al. have posited three major phases in the history of psychoanalytic research into telepathy—the first phase (1920-1953), during the course of which it was considered to be a legitimate topic for professional interest; the second phase (1953-1980), during which time interest in its study diminished considerably; and a third phase (1980 to the present), when a growing interest in the topic began to reappear—see Thomas Rabeyron, Renaud Evrard & Claudie Massicotte, ‘Psychoanalysis and Telepathic Processes,’ *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association* 69: 3 (2021). For a very helpful overview of the history of the paranormal in psychoanalysis, see Richard Reichbart, *The Paranormal Surrounds Us: Psychic Phenomena in Literature, Culture and Psychoanalysis* [Foreword. by Mikita Brottman: Afterword by Michael Prescott] (Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2019), chapters six and seven.

¹⁰ See Dennis Farrell, ‘Freud’s “Thought-transference,” Repression, And The Future of Psychoanalysis,’ *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 64 (1983), pp. 71-81 and Alessandro Calvesi, ‘The analytic relationship and its therapeutic factors from a parapsychological view point,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review* 70 (1983), pp. 387-402 for evidence of both of these perspectives, the respective viewpoints of which it is proposed can be construed as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. On the concepts of the *crypt* and *preservative repression* see the following: ‘The concepts of secret, crypt, incorporation, and the phantom enlarge upon or redirect the Freudian definition of personal identity as beset by unconscious conflicts, desires and fantasies ... In contrast to this Freudian structure of oppositions, Abraham and Torok explore the mental landscapes of submerged family secrets and traumatic tombs in which ... actual events are treated as if they had never occurred. Instead of the shifting fortunes of opponents locked in combat (repression verses repressed instinct), what matters is the preservation of a shut-up or excluded reality ... Preservative repression seals off access to part of one’s life in order to shelter from view the traumatic monument of an obliterated event,’ Nicolas T. Rand, ‘Introduction,’ in: Nicolas Abraham & Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel* [ed., trans. & intro. by Nicholas T. Rand] (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 18.

¹¹ Leopold Fulgencio, ‘Freud’s metapsychological speculations,’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 86: 1 (2005), p. 99.

¹² See Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology: The Dream of A Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Thomas Hardy Leahey & Grace Evans Leahey, *Psychology’s Occult Doubles: Psychology and the Problem of Pseudoscience* (Chicago: Nelson Hall Inc., 1983). For a more recent critique of

When, then, we talk of ‘psychology as a natural science’ we must not assume that means a sort of psychology that stands at last on solid ground. It means just the reverse; it means a psychology particularly fragile and into which the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint ... [We have] not a single law in the sense that physics shows us laws ... This is no science, it is only the hope of science.¹³

In the estimation of Thomas and Grace Leahey, ‘Psychology is an interesting case because it seems to sit astride the line between science and pseudoscience ... Psychoanalysis and especially parapsychology, for example, are frequently under attack and seem to occupy the pseudoscience end of the scientific continuum’.¹⁴ More recent commentators such as Elizabeth Mayer have sought to reverse this evaluation by critiquing the ‘tired but long-lived debate’ surrounding the putative ‘scientific’ status of psychoanalysis, contending that ‘our work is quintessentially subjective and intersubjective ... a science based on the capacity to make observations characterised by ideals of objectivity, certainty and precision is a science that is frankly irrelevant to us’.¹⁵ Moreover—and more radically—Mayer has advocated for the deployment of parapsychological research to enhance our understanding of ‘the cognitive and communicative processes entailed by psychoanalytic subjectivity and intersubjectivity’.¹⁶

the idea of a strict binary opposition separating ‘science’ from ‘pseudoscience’ that draws extensively upon the methods of discourse analysis, see von Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion*, pp. 180-181. For a helpful discursus on the historical genealogy of ‘science,’ see Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, pp. 59-60.

¹³ William James (1892), cited in: Susan Rowland, *Remembering Dionysus: Revisioning psychology and literature in C.G. Jung and James Hillman* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 15.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 4. For an interesting sociological account of the role played by the paranormal in demarcating ‘legitimate’ from ‘illegitimate’ forms of knowledge, see Jeremy Northcote, *The Paranormal and the Politics of Truth: A Sociological Account* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007).

¹⁵ Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer, ‘Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity of Clinical Facts,’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 77 (1996), p. 711-712.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 710, pp. 717-735. See also Elizabeth L. Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing: Science, Skepticism, and the Inexplicable Powers of the Human Mind* (New York: Bantam Books, 2007), pp. 69-96 for an intriguing ‘revisionist’ account that emphasises the methodological sophistication and rigour of the best parapsychological research.

It has often been observed that the techniques of ‘science’ do not extend to the domains of meaning and value, thereby resulting in an ontological ‘lack’ that dialectically stimulates the need for its own compensatory alterity:

If science is a pragmatic search for puzzle solutions, it does not ask, and cannot answer ultimate questions ... [Pseudosciences] ... are not sciences because they try to delve deeper than any science can.

To say that they are not sciences is not to condemn them, except to the believers in scientism ... the searcher after Truth ought not to go to science in the first place.

Instead the searcher should go to philosophy, art, literature and religion. Not every human question has a scientific answer.¹⁷

The question as to how such tensions have been variously negotiated across the wider scientific and socio-cultural fields is complex and its systematic investigation lies outside of the immediate purview of this thesis.¹⁸ However, one particular approach that I would like to draw upon for my current purposes entails the reframing of these binary oppositions by substituting in their place a sense of the ‘doubleness’ of ‘science’ as conceptualised by Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), so that the empirical and the metaphysical, the sacred and the secular, can be reconstituted as complementary aspects of an underlying dual-aspect monism.¹⁹ In support of this proposal, it is worthwhile observing that both psychoanalytic and parapsychological theories of mind can be conceptualised as sharing a dual-aspect monist

¹⁷ Leahey & Leahey, *Psychology's Occult Doubles*, p. 241, p. 245.

¹⁸ See Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900-1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2014) and Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment* for exemplary in-depth exegeses of this question.

¹⁹ See Roderick Main, ‘Secular and Religious: The Intrinsic Doubleness of Analytical Psychology and the Hegemony of Naturalism in the Social Sciences,’ *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 58: 3 (2013), pp. 366-386.

ontology.²⁰ However, it is also important to acknowledge that there are nuances of opinion on this topic and that not all scholars of psychoanalysis necessarily subscribe to the view that Freud was a *de facto* dual aspect monist.²¹ The potential vistas opened up by such debates nonetheless support a recognition that ‘mind or consciousness is the subject and locus of *all* scientific practice and knowledge; that science, at the end of the day, is a function of human subjectivity and consciousness’.²² Hence, it has been proposed that:

An alternative to old-fashioned Physicalism that has received increasing attention in recent years is to consider neither the mental nor the physical as fundamental but ... to trace them *both* back to a shared substratum or superreality. This is essentially what is done in dual-aspect monism.²³

It is from within the matrix of possibilities arising from such speculations that the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of ‘science’ that this thesis sets out to investigate can most appropriately be situated. Within the human sciences there is an increasing acknowledgement ‘that scientific

²⁰ See Mark Solms & Oliver H. Turnbull, ‘What is Neuropsychanalysis?’, *Neuropsychanalysis* 13: 2 (2011), pp. 4-5, who argue that the psychoanalytic theory of mind is essentially dual aspect monist in terms of its orientation. On the association between dual aspect monism and ‘paranormal’ theories of mind, see Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Secret Body: Erotic and Esoteric Currents in the History of Religions* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 197-200 and Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Flip: Epiphanies of Mind and the Future of Knowledge* (New York: Bellvue Literary Press, 2019), pp. 118-122.

²¹ For example, Auchincloss is of the opinion that most psychoanalysts function as ‘*property dualists*, meaning that even if we understand that mind emerges from brain, we know that we must separate mind and brain for clinical purposes’ (2015, p. 4) In a similar vein, Britton argues ‘It is clear that psychoanalysts following Freud are monists who nevertheless accept that mind exists as a function of brain’ (2015, p. 9). However, while such divergences of opinion on this question are to be acknowledged, it is worthwhile emphasising that as the editor of the Revised Standard Edition of Freud’s writings, Solms’ views on this topic are firmly anchored both in his deep acquaintance with the entirety of the Freudian *corpus*, as well as in his internationally acknowledged expertise in neuropsychanalysis.

²² Kripal, *The Flip*, p. 15. For my present purposes, the concept of dual aspect monism can very briefly be defined as follows: ‘Here both mind and matter are understood as aspects of some more basic level of reality, which itself is neither mental nor material and eludes our established knowledge so far,’ Harald Atmanspacher & Dean Rickles, *Dual-Aspect Monism and the Deep Structure of Meaning* (New York: Routledge, 2022), p. 3.

²³ Kripal, *The Flip*, p. 118.

and non-scientific ideas and practices have strongly influenced and enriched each other'.²⁴ Moreover, within the field of psychoanalysis, there is a growing awareness of the extent to which 'the non-psychoanalytic sources influencing a given theory not only fail to be acknowledged, but undergo a process of conversion and change that conveniently adapts them to the theory and distances them from their roots'.²⁵

In the light of these prevailing circumstances, discourse analytic approaches possess a certain utility with regards to the mapping out of the various discursive 'hybrids' 'knots' and 'entanglements' conjoining the 'scientific' to the 'esoteric'.²⁶ Moreover, given that complex terms such as 'soul' or 'self' can only be comprehended amidst the wider matrix of historical and cultural associations from within which they acquire their meaning, questions of 'definition' need to be tailored accordingly.²⁷ Kocku von Stuckrad has proposed the existence of three major discursive trajectories within psychology, each of which exemplifies a different strategy for developing a vocabulary of the 'soul'.²⁸ According to von Stuckrad's analysis, the first of these trajectories sought to 'eliminate' the soul as part of a wider Faustian endeavour to obtain methodological 'objectivity'. The second worked towards achieving a similar goal by means of adopting a process of 'scientification,' the enactment of which entailed the 'translation' of 'soul' into the nomenclature of 'science'. In marked contrast to these first two approaches, the third of these discourses sought to create a more

²⁴ Kocku von Stuckrad, *A Cultural History of the Soul: Europe and North America from 1870 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), pp. xvii-xviii.

²⁵ Aner Govrin, *Conservative and Radical Perspectives on Psychoanalytic Knowledge: The fascinated and the disenchanted* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 20-21.

²⁶ See von Stuckrad's *The Scientification of Religion* and *A Cultural History of the Soul* for exemplary book-length expositions of this kind of approach.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, p. xv, p. 244. In the light of these considerations, questions of definition as encountered throughout the course of this thesis will be largely addressed in the footnotes.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 120-123.

poetically charged ‘Orphic science’ imbued with the energies of the Dionysiac.²⁹ While it is evident that the various psychoanalytic ‘schools’ have, at different times, inhabited (to a greater or lesser degree) all three of these discourses, it is with the ‘Orphic’ trajectory that this thesis is most fully concerned.³⁰ The diachronic processes of superimposition and divergence that exemplify relations between these three discourses have more recently been conceptually reconfigured within contemporary psychoanalysis in the form of an uneasy dialectics conjoining the psychoanalytic communities of the *fascinated* with those of the more *troubled*.³¹

These combined frames of reference provide the wider theoretical context to this thesis, the arguments of which draw upon a wide range of primary and secondary sources in order to develop an original theory describing how esoteric ‘traces’ came to be ‘encrypted’ within psychoanalysis during the course of its formation, resulting in the development of an *Orphic trajectory* whose effects it argues have persisted within psychoanalysis to this day. The present chapter sets out the theoretical context to this thesis and introduces the range of historiographical and conceptual perspectives that it draws upon in order to undertake the task of its exposition. Chapter two makes the case for identifying the precursors to the Orphic trajectory within psychoanalysis as originating in the late Baroque, German Idealist and

²⁹ von Stuckrad, *A Cultural History of the Soul*, p. 121. My coinage of the term ‘Orphic trajectory’ in this context was arrived at independently of von Stuckrad’s adoption of the ‘Orphic’ rubric to denote a particular ‘web’ of psycho-spiritual discourse, having previously been derived from my reading of Sándor Ferenczi’s *Clinical Diary* (1933) as described in chapter four. This thematic convergence may conceivably be thought of as providing mutually supportive evidence for both theses—see John Boyle, ‘From Metapsychology to Magnetic Gnosis: An Esoteric Context for Interpreting Traumatic Modes of Transcendence in Sándor Ferenczi’s *Clinical Diary* and Elizabeth Severn’s *The Discovery of the Self*,’ *Psychoanalysis and History* 23: 3 (2021), pp. 297-323.

³⁰ I would like to emphasise at this point that my account of an Orphic trajectory within psychoanalysis is not by any means intended to delimit the existence of alternative ‘pathways’ for the transmission of the esoteric within psychoanalysis.

³¹ ‘... throughout its history, psychoanalysis has successfully embraced an amalgam of ... *fascinated* and *troubled* communities. A *fascinated community* is a group who adopts a psychoanalytic theory ... as presenting their world-view. A *troubled community* is one that is not satisfied with the state of psychoanalytic knowledge and seeks to generate a fundamental change that does not square with existing traditions,’ Govrin, *Conservative and Radical Perspectives on Psychoanalytic Knowledge*, p. 2.

Romantic traditions, as exemplified for the purposes of this thesis in the writings of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), F.W.J. von Schelling (1775-1854) and G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831). The pervasive influence of these three figures is then shown to have extended across the various ‘schools’ of esoteric mesmerism that preceded the rise of hypnosis as the prevailing medicalised alternative to its more metaphysically troubling mesmeric and somnambulistic predecessors. Chapter three focuses on the role of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) as an exemplar of the ‘dark Enlightenment,’ as evidenced by the demonstrable significance of telepathy, psychical research and the Jewish Kabbalah in the formation of a specifically Freudian psychoanalysis. Chapter four locates the explicit instantiation of the Orphic trajectory within psychoanalysis in the collaboration between Sándor Ferenczi (1873-1933) and Elizabeth Severn (1879-1959), and concludes with a brief account of Severn’s only ‘heir,’ the largely neglected ‘psychoanalytic parapsychologist,’ Nandor Fodor (1895-1964).³² Chapter five traces the continuation of this Orphic trajectory in the writings of W. R. Bion (1897-1979) as illustrated via the covert imbrication of Jungian, parapsychological, Kabbalistic and theurgic elements in his later writings. The thesis then concludes with a brief exposition of the esoteric themes adumbrated in James Grotstein’s (1925-2015) *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences* (2000), a work which it further identifies as constituting a textual exemplar for the Orphic trajectory in contemporary post-Bionian psychoanalysis. It is also proposed that elements of the ‘oneiric’ school of post-Bionian psychoanalysis can be conceptualised as an avatar for the psychoanalytic parapsychological ‘tradition’ translated into a contemporary psychoanalytic idiom.

³² See Peter L. Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis: Ferenczi, Severn, and the Origins of Trauma Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2022), p. 148.

1.2. A brief outline of my ‘personal equation’ in this thesis³³

In view of the avowedly ‘esoteric’ themes explored in this thesis, it seems a reasonable expectation that its readers be provided with some kind of preliminary orientation as to how its author came to settle upon this admittedly obscure topic of research. Stripped to its essentials, the origins of this thesis might be said to lie in three discrete ‘encounters’—clinical, textual and artistic in nature—that subsequently came together to form a kind of ‘constellation’ in the mind of its author.³⁴ The first of these encounters can briefly be summarised as follows.

Many years ago when I was training as an integrative psychotherapist in London, I worked with a female client in her mid-twenties I shall refer to as ‘Tina,’ whom I saw on a once weekly basis for a period of about a year. It was during the course of our work together that the following incident occurred. To set the scene, since the therapy room was on the second floor and the waiting room was on the ground floor, each session began with my collecting Tina from the waiting room in order to escort her to the therapy room. Over the time that we worked together, I had observed that Tina often liked to make small talk on the way up to the therapy room. However, I had also noticed that she tended to fall silent whenever there was something that was particularly troubling her. On this occasion, Tina was silent, which alerted me to the possibility that something might be wrong. As I was mulling over what this could possibly be, I was suddenly gripped by the absolute sense of certainty that she was

³³ ‘The “personal equation” was first nominated to designate a calculus of observational error in astronomy. It became the hallmark of the attempt to develop an objective experimental science of psychology, and then conversely, an epistemological abyss that delimited the selfsame project,’ Shamdasani, *Jung and the making of Modern Psychology*, p. 30.

³⁴ My use of the term ‘constellation’ in this context is indebted to Walter Benjamin’s conjectures regarding ‘a clear connection’ between his ideas concerning an ‘occult astrology and his notion of the constellation as a way of revealing hidden correspondences,’ Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, p. 231.

pregnant. I have to emphasise that this awareness came to me not in the form of rumination or speculation, but in the form of a ‘sure and certain’ knowledge. Once we entered the room, Tina sat down, burst into tears, and informed me that she was indeed pregnant.

I recall having to hold back a spontaneous urge to respond to this disclosure by saying ‘I know,’ as I felt that such a response would make me sound too disturbingly omniscient. Moreover, my ostensible ‘omniscience’ was in fact underpinned by an equally disconcerting ignorance as to how I had actually ‘known’ this, only that I had; and that, consciously at least, I could discern in Tina’s appearance no visible signs of pregnancy. More importantly from a clinical perspective, my initial response to this exchange was guided by the fact that Tina was deeply distressed by the implications of her pregnancy, which meant that her need for me to help her address her situation took precedence over any sense of perplexity I had concerning the precise nature of the ‘communication’ that had just transpired between us. As I reviewed this session subsequently, my sense of the ‘uncanny’ nature of this exchange deepened. Although Tina was in the early stages of a relationship, neither the desire for, nor the fear of, pregnancy had been prominent as content, symbol or metaphor (at least insofar as I could consciously discern) either centrally or tangentially. Moreover, at the time in question, I was unaware that such instances of ‘anomalous communication’ in psychotherapy were a comparatively common occurrence.³⁵ My subsequent attempts to obtain clarity in supervision regarding the precise nature of what had occurred during this session were largely unsatisfactory, insofar as its more ‘uncanny’ elements tended to be obscured beneath a range of ‘technical’ rubrics, such as ‘unconscious communication,’ ‘projective identification’ and

³⁵ When in 1997 the late Elizabeth Mayer and a colleague set up a discussion group entitled ‘Intuition, Unconscious Communication, and “Thought Transference”’ under the auspices of the American Psychoanalytic Association, the conveners were promptly ‘inundated’ with enquiries from psychoanalysts keen to join—see Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*, pp. 13-16.

‘communicative countertransference,’ to name but three. As a consequence, I was left with a growing sense that:

[T]he world we ordinarily know is confined by our imaginations, phantasies, perceptions, and conceptions ... we live in a veritable bell jar of our epistemic limitations, a bell jar that is surrounded by mystery.³⁶

The second of these encounters was textual in nature and occurred a few years later. It concerned my response to reading James Grotstein’s *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences* (2000) in preparation for a series of lectures its author was due to deliver on the late writings of W.R. Bion as part of a clinical psychoanalytic training I was undertaking at that time.³⁷ While I was cognizant that Grotstein had been analysed by Bion, and that his work was usually categorised as being ‘post-Kleinian’ in terms of its orientation, I nonetheless found myself intrigued and perplexed in equal measure by the contents of this ‘elaborated Gnostic gospel of depth psychology,’ the text of which seemed to me to read as though the contents of a magical *grimoire* had somehow been ‘downloaded’ into the nomenclature of a psychoanalytic treatise.³⁸ My ongoing preoccupation with the clinical and theoretical implications arising from this apparent ‘superimposition’ of genres constitutes the central focus for the conclusion to this thesis.

My final encounter was with the work of the ‘paraconceptual’ artist Susan Hiller (1940-2019). I first came across Hiller’s work during the course of a visit to The Freud Museum in

³⁶ James S. Grotstein, ‘The numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject,’ *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 43 (1996), pp. 48-49.

³⁷ James S. Grotstein, *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

³⁸ Kerry Gordon, ‘The tiger’s stripe: Some thoughts on psychoanalysis, gnosis, and the experience of wonderment,’ *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 40 (2004), p. 18.

London sometime in the 1990s.³⁹ While I was initially disconcerted by the peculiar sense of the ‘uncanny’ that her art installation *From the Freud Museum* (1991-1996) evoked in me, I found I could make little sense of it at that time, and consigned its peculiar resonance to the penumbra of my pre-conscious, where it remained consigned to a state of suspended animation, as a kind of aesthetically-rendered *enigmatic signifier* awaiting its moment of *Nachträglichkeit*.⁴⁰ However, I subsequently had an opportunity to attend a major retrospective of Hiller’s work that was held in Tate Britain in 2011, during the course of which I experienced an intense receptivity to her artistry, as exemplified in works such as *Dream Mapping* (1974), *Automatic Writing* (1979-1981), *Psi Girls* (1999) and *Witness* (2000). I became fascinated by Hiller’s approach to artistic creativity and was intrigued by the references in her writings to Freud’s papers on telepathy, as well as her citation of liminal figures from the field of ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology,’ such as Nandor Fodor and Jules Eisenbud (1908-1999).⁴¹ The influence of Hiller’s work is pervasive throughout this thesis, with the initial part of its title being taken in homage from one of her essays.⁴² As Adam Phillips has observed:

If the aim of a system is to create an outside where you can put the things you don’t want, then we have to look at what the system disposes of—its rubbish—to understand it, to get a picture of how it sees itself and wants to be seen. The

³⁹ Hiller’s usage of the prefix ‘para’ in this context is reminiscent of the usage of this term by the vitalist biologist Hans Driesch (1867-1941), who was similarly ‘convinced of the relevance of occultism and psychology for the emergence of a new understanding of science,’—see von Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion*, p. 66.

⁴⁰ *Nachträglichkeit*: ‘Term frequently used by Freud in connection with his view of psychical temporality and causality: experiences, impressions and memory traces may be revised at a later date to fit in with fresh experiences or with the attainment of a new stage of development,’ in: Jean Laplanche & Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1988), p. 111. Laplanche’s concept of *enigmatic signification* is discussed later in the present chapter.

⁴¹ See Susan Hiller, *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts, 1977-2007* [ed. Alexandra M. Kikoli] (Dijon: JRP/Ringier, Zurich, & Les Presses du reel, 2008), p. 240.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 239-243. ‘Before and After Science’ is, of course, also the title of an eponymous album by Brian Eno (1977).

proscribed vocabulary in anybody's theory is as telling as the recommended vocabulary.⁴³

Hiller's *From the Freud Museum* engages in an exemplary fashion in 'the wilful blurring of archive and debris' as part of its aesthetic *modus operandi*; whilst the totality of her work as a whole has been described as 'populat[ing] the world with "enigmatic signifiers."' ⁴⁴ In a manner of speaking, the central task of this thesis can be conceptualised as the undertaking of a close examination of the paranormal 'debris' that more usually gets expelled (via processes such as *negative hallucination*)⁴⁵ to the 'outside' of the psychoanalytic 'archive,' in the hope that, by engaging in such an act of retrieval, we can more readily establish what glimmers of 'gold' might conceivably lie therein. In particular, Hiller's notion of the *paraconceptual* has been adopted as a central organizing principle throughout this thesis as a means for conceptualising relations between the esoteric and the psychoanalytic:

Just to the side of Conceptualism and neighbouring the paranormal [...] the 'paraconceptual' opens up a hybrid field of radical ambiguity where neither Conceptualism nor the paranormal are left intact: the prefix "para" allows in a force of contamination through a proximity so great that it threatens the soundness of all boundaries.⁴⁶

⁴³ Adam Phillips, *Terrors and Experts* (London: Faber, 1995), p. 19.

⁴⁴ Alexandra M. Kokoli, 'Moving Sideways and other "Sleeping Metaphors": Susan Hiller's Paraconceptualism,' in: Ann Gallagher (ed.) *Susan Hiller* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), p. 148, p. 152.

⁴⁵ *Negative hallucination*: '[A] phenomenon with the following ... characteristics: (1) it is the converse of hallucination and constitutes the non-perception of an object or perceptible psychic phenomenon, (2) it involves a wish to reject a distress-inducing perception, (3) it plays an important role in repressing and repudiating aspects of external reality, (4) it is not limited to external objects and can affect internal perceptions' in: Salman Akhtar, *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2009), p. 185.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

Having outlined the main themes explored in this thesis, we can now move on to provide a review of its theoretical and conceptual framework.

1.3. Trace, spectrality, trauma and transcendence—the haunting of psychoanalysis by its esoteric *other*

As Jacques Derrida has observed, archives are invariably haunted by that which they attempt to exclude.⁴⁷ This ‘haunting’ can at times take on a rather more literal quality than one might expect amidst the various hermeneutic occlusions that are habitually encountered within contemporary cultural theory.⁴⁸ In the light of such prevailing circumstances, it is worthwhile extending the ‘conceptual metaphors’ of *haunting* and *spectrality*, so as to include within their ambit the interrogation and problematisation of a cultural regime in which ongoing attempts to police the disciplinary parameters of the ontologically permissible possible ‘real’ constitutes a recurring feature of the academic milieu.⁴⁹ While the more immediate origins to

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* [trans. Eric Prenowitz] (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998). Viewed from a slightly different perspective, we could also say that ‘*our conclusions are really a function of our exclusions*,’ Kripal, *The Flip*, p. 40.

⁴⁸ For an illustration of what is meant by such processes of ‘occlusion’ see, for example, Sasha Roseneil, ‘Haunting in an Age of Individualization,’ *European Societies*, 11, 3 (2009), pp. 411-430. In this paper, we find that the text is itself ‘haunted’ by its own disavowed ‘spectre’. On p. 413 the author, in the course of invoking the ‘conceptual metaphors’ of ‘ghosts’ and ‘haunting,’ asserts that this kind of terminology was not actually employed by any of the research participants. Yet by the time we get to p. 420, we find that one of these same participants has related verbatim a story about a purported encounter with the ghost of his late father. In the text, the research participant’s subjective experience and explanatory frame of reference (‘it was a ghost’) is intellectually filed away (or *said away*, to use Jeffrey Kripal’s evocative term for denoting the strategic deployment of reductive explanatory strategies) under the sociological rubric of ‘idionecrophany’ (i.e. the ‘relatively common’ experience of ‘contact with the dead as reported by the bereaved’). This observation is not intended to be a criticism of what is an otherwise fine paper. Rather, it suggests that such instances can be viewed as indices of a wider academic milieu in which ‘anomalous’ disclosures are covertly policed by conceptual demarcatory processes, through which the limits of the academic possible ‘real’ are protected from the destabilising effects of a more ‘spectral’ infiltration as described by Méheust in the epigraph to this chapter.

⁴⁹ ‘A conceptual metaphor ... differs from an ordinary one in evoking, through a dynamic comparative interaction, not just another thing, word or idea and its associations, but a discourse, a system of producing knowledge. Besides fulfilling an aesthetic or semantic function, then, a conceptual metaphor “performs theoretical work,”’ María del Pilar Blanco & Esther Peeren (eds.) ‘Introduction,’ in: *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Hauntings in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 1.

hauntology are to be found in Derrida's engagement with psychoanalysis and Marxism, in dialogue with the writings of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, its more distant antecedents can be traced to a diverse range of sources that includes Romanticism, the Gothic, Spiritualism and fin de siècle psychology, as can be inferred from the matrix of associated metaphors that subsequently emerged from the then newly evolving media of telegraphy, photography and cinema.⁵⁰ According to Derrida:

Freud did everything possible to not neglect the experiences of haunting, spectrality, phantoms, ghosts. He tried to account for them. Courageously, in as scientific, critical and positive a fashion as possible. But by doing that, he also tried to conjure them ... His scientific positivism was put to the service of his declared hauntedness and of his unavowed fear.⁵¹

Derrida's invocation of *hauntology* is avowedly indebted to Abraham and Torok's investigations into the role of the *phantom* as a vehicle for the transgenerational transmission of traumas that have become *encrypted* as 'traumatic secrets' leading to a 'loss of the self'.⁵² However, while the latter's concept of the *phantom* denotes the covert instantiation of a 'lie about the past,' Derrida's notion of the *spectre* expresses a more hopeful aspiration 'towards a still unformulated future'.⁵³ Both of these respective distinctions are drawn upon in an ad hoc fashion throughout the course of this thesis. Hans Loewald (1906-1993) has highlighted the importance of transforming 'ghosts' into 'ancestors' as constituting an essential clinical

⁵⁰ See Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 8-9; Blanco & Peeren (eds.) *The Spectralities Reader*, pp. 2-19. For a helpful account of a specifically 'English' current within hauntology (deriving from the work of the late Mark Fisher in particular), see Merlin Coverley, *Hauntology: Ghosts of Futures Past* (Harpending: Oldcastle Books Ltd, 2020).

⁵¹ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 85.

⁵² See Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* [foreword by Jacques Derrida; trans. by Nicolas Rand] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986) and Abraham & Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*.

⁵³ Blanco & Peeren, 'Introduction,' p. 7; Blanco & Peeren, 'The Spectral Turn,' *The Spectralities Reader* p. 58. See also Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, pp. 10-11 for a helpful elucidation of this distinction.

feature of the ‘therapeutic action’ of psychoanalysis.⁵⁴ Moreover, we find, embedded in Loewald’s account, a ‘stunning re-definition of the unconscious as a crowd of ghosts’.⁵⁵

However, as Terry Castle has astutely observed:

The problem with displacing the supernatural “back” into the realm of psychology ... is that it remains precisely that: only a displacement. The unearthliness, the charisma, the devastating *noumenon* of the supernatural is conserved. One cannot speak in the end ... of a “decline in magic” in post-Enlightenment Western culture, only perhaps of its relocation within the new empire of subjectivity itself ... But the effect was to demonize the world of thought. We have yet to explore very deeply the social, intellectual, and existential implications of the act of demonization.⁵⁶

More recent psychoanalytic theorists such as Adrienne Harris and her colleagues have augmented the ‘conceptual metaphor’ of the ‘ghost’ in order to articulate the associated features of its more disturbing manifestations, to which they ascribe yet darker rubrics such as ‘demons’ and ‘vampires’.⁵⁷ As the authors remark in the introduction to the first of their two edited volumes, ‘... words like uncanny and haunted are required, the words and language of object relations and internal objects seem too orderly for the experiences the authors in these books are describing’.⁵⁸ Consequently, for the purposes of this thesis, the

⁵⁴ Hans Loewald, ‘On the Therapeutic Action of Psycho-Analysis,’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 41 (1960), p. 29. Notably, Loewald references an allusion to chapter seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) in which the ‘indestructibility of unconscious mental acts is compared by Freud to the ghosts of the underworld in the *Odyssey*’ (ibid.).

⁵⁵ Donna Orange, ‘Review of *Ghosts in the Consulting Room: Echoes of Trauma in Psychoanalysis* and *Demons in the Consulting Room: Echoes of Genocide, Slavery and Extreme Trauma in Psychoanalytic Practice*,’ *Psychoanalysis, Self and Context* 12: 1 (2017), p. 92.

⁵⁶ Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: 18th Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 189.

⁵⁷ See Adrienne Harris, Margery Kalb & Susan Klebanoff (eds.), *Ghosts in the Consulting Room: Echoes of Trauma in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Adrienne Harris, Margery Kalb & Susan Klebanoff (eds.) *Demons in the Consulting Room: Echoes of genocide, slavery and extreme trauma in psychoanalytic practice* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁵⁸ Harris et al., ‘Introduction,’ *Ghosts in the Consulting Room*, p. 7.

‘revenants’ thereby conjured have been psychoanalytically reconceptualised as spectral ‘traces,’ trans-generationally transmitted via processes of *enigmatic signification*, that possess the potential to ‘affect institutions and cultures no less than they do individuals’.⁵⁹ Hence, a distinction can usefully be made between the ‘vertical’ (intergenerational) and ‘horizontal’ (interpersonal) ‘communications’ brought about by such processes.⁶⁰ Moreover, the processes of retrieval thereby embarked upon have been extended to include neglected figures such as Elizabeth Severn and Nandor Fodor, whose theoretical and clinical contributions have thus far largely been consigned to the peripheries of psychoanalytic historiography.⁶¹ It is in the light of such considerations that a hauntological historiography has been adopted as a resource to assist in the formation of a spectral cartography of the uncanny and decentred Freudian subject ‘haunted’ by *traces* of its occluded, esoteric *other*.⁶²

Theories of trauma and its treatment—often contested—have been central to psychoanalysis since its inception.⁶³ What has been less frequently remarked upon in the literature is the potential for trauma—albeit in comparatively rare and exceptional cases—to act as a gateway for accessing transcendent alterations in consciousness.⁶⁴ Young-Bruehl and Schwartz have cogently argued for an acknowledgement of the extent to which the history of psychoanalysis

⁵⁹ Sam Gerson, ‘Afterword,’ in: Harris et al., *Ghosts in the Consulting Room*, p. 202.

⁶⁰ See Frosh, *Hauntings*, pp. 5-6, pp. 45-46.

⁶¹ See chapter four.

⁶² ‘I used the term haunting to describe those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what’s been in your blind spot comes into view. Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future,’ Avery Gordon (1997) cited in: Frosh, *Hauntings*, p. 2.

⁶³ For an excellent, in-depth account of Freud’s theorising on trauma, see John Fletcher, *Freud and the Scene of Trauma* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2013). See also Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis* for a lucid exposition of the ‘heterodox’ psychoanalytic theory of trauma jointly developed by Sándor Ferenczi and Elizabeth Severn. Their innovations in the development of a ‘heterodox’ trauma theory are discussed in chapter four.

⁶⁴ For notable exceptions to this assertion, see Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*, p. 101 and Thomas Rabeyron & Tianna Loose, ‘Anomalous Experiences, Trauma, and Symbolisation Processes at the Frontiers between Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Neurosciences,’ 6: Art. 1926 (2015), pp. 1-17. See also Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Comparing Religions* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp. 198-204, pp. 284-286 for an account of the importance of the ‘traumatic secret’ as a catalyst for triggering transcendent alterations in consciousness.

has been riven by disavowed processes of trauma, fragmentation and dissociation that have led to the formation of a series of defensively appropriated narratives, the deconstruction and revision of which necessarily requires a ‘recognition of the inevitable investment we make in any construction of the past, and the interminable process of becoming conscious of the structure and purpose of that investment’.⁶⁵ Building on the work of these two authors, it is proposed that in order to more adequately facilitate a corrective to such deleterious processes, it will be helpful to adopt a hauntological approach to historiography that explicitly focuses upon matters of recognition and retrieval, through which the more occluded processes of trauma—and of transcendence—can be more clearly discerned in the guise of an *Orphic trajectory* active within psychoanalysis.⁶⁶ Rhodri Hayward has drawn our attention to the manner in which the ‘unconscious self ... was something constructed in the nineteenth-century struggles over the historical status of the supernatural’.⁶⁷ In an analogous fashion, this thesis argues that the various discourse ‘entanglements’ arising from the imbrication of the ‘occult’ with the aspirations of a nascent psychoanalytic ‘science’ acted as the ‘canvas’ upon which the semiotically encrypted *hieroglyphs* of the esoteric came to be both preserved *and* negated (in the Hegelian sense of ‘sublation’) within the substantive fabric of a conceptually ‘traumatised’ psychoanalytic metapsychology, whose instantiation was simultaneously co-opted to act as ‘an immense defence, a *Reizschutz* against the so-called “outside”’.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Young-Bruehl & Murray M. Schwartz, ‘Why psychoanalysis has no history,’ *American Imago* 69:1 (2012), p. 158.

⁶⁶ For a detailed exposition of the ‘hauntological’ approach to history employed in this thesis, see Ethan Kleinberg, *Haunting History: For a Deconstructive Approach to the Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017). See also chapter four for an account of the roles played trauma and transcendence in the formation of an Orphic trajectory within psychoanalysis.

⁶⁷ Rhodri Hayward, *Resisting History: Religious transcendence and the invention of the unconscious* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 63.

⁶⁸ Mikkel Borch-Jacobson, ‘Foreword,’ in: Todd Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. x. As has been remarked ‘...the Freudian uncanny is a function of *enlightenment*,’ Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, p. 7. For an intriguing account of the origins of Freud’s ‘witch meta-psychology,’ see Carlo Bonomi, *The Cut and Building of Psychoanalysis, Volume 1: Sigmund Freud and Emma Eckstein* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 208-232. Freud’s use of the term ‘metapsychology’ occurs as early as 10th March 1898 in his correspondence with Fleiss (Masson, 1985,

While the Kabbalistic and Derridean resonances generated by the rubric of ‘trace’ connotes the conceptual interpenetration of the mystical with the post-modern, its central inflection is provided by Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) 1925 paper, ‘A Note Upon The “Mystic Writing Pad,”’ in which the image of a wax palimpsest is set forth as a metaphor for describing how memory is simultaneously made subject to processes of inscription and erasure.⁶⁹

Thus the Pad provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written, like an ordinary paper pad: it solves the problem of combining the two functions *by dividing them between two separate but interrelated component parts or systems* ... The layer which receives the stimuli ... forms no permanent traces; the foundations of memory come about in other, adjoining, systems.⁷⁰

It is proposed that this composite notion of ‘trace’ characterises the nature of relations between the esoteric and the psychoanalytic as set out in this thesis. This conceptual

pp. 301-302). However, by the time we get to ‘Analysis Terminable and Interminable’ (1937), Freud has come to liken his metapsychology to a ‘witch,’ whose activities inhabit a liminal state of mind located somewhere between the realms of ‘speculation’ and ‘phantasying’. When read in conjunction with Duffy (2020), Prokhoris (1995) and Vitz (1988), the ‘witch’ metaphor begins to acquire the attributes of a subliminal ‘imaginary,’ whose longitudinal persistence recurs throughout the corpus of Freud’s writings.

⁶⁹ Elliott R. Wolfson, ‘Assaulting the Border: Kabbalistic Traces in the Margins of Derrida,’ *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 70, 3 (2002), pp. 475-514. See also Jacques Derrida, ‘Freud and the Scene of Writing,’ in *Writing and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 246-291.

⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud, ‘A Note Upon The “Mystic Writing-Pad”’ (1925): in *On Metapsychology* (London: Penguin, 1991) [S.E. XIX 91923-1925] 225-232, pp. 427-434. Notably, Derrida (*Archive Fever*, p. 83 n. 17) construes certain themes in the correspondence between Freud and Wilhelm Fleiss (6th December 1896) as prefiguring specific themes developed in this later essay—see Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (trans. & ed.), *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss 1887-1904* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 207-215. For a close reading of the significance of this letter for Laplanche’s recasting of Freud’s original seduction theory, see John Fletcher & Nicholas Ray, ‘Introduction: Seductions And Enigmas: Laplanche, Reading, Theory,’ in: John Fletcher & Nicholas Ray (eds.), *Seductions and Enigmas: Laplanche, Theory, Culture* (London: Laurence & Wisheart, 2014), pp. 33-37. For a helpful commentary on the historiographical implications of Freud’s 1925 essay, see Kleinberg, *Haunting History*, pp. 65-68.

metaphor is further extended to denote the role of such ‘traces’ as ‘vehicles’ for the transmission and *enigmatic signification* of the esoteric within the psychoanalytic:

[Enigmatic signifiers] disrupt psychological life, conveying a sense of signifying something *to* the subject. *What* they signify is an enigma, like finding a hieroglyph in the desert. The story of relationships and culture is the story of our repeated attempts to translate them, to respond to them.⁷¹

It lies outside my remit to provide a detailed exposition of Jean Laplanche’s (1924-2012) ‘Copernican’ re-reading of Freud’s early seduction theory, his substantive revisions to which constitute the theoretical scaffolding for his ideas concerning the enigmatic signifier or ‘message’.⁷² For the purposes of this thesis, it is sufficient to observe that his account of a ‘general theory of primal seduction’ entails the ‘implantation’ of ‘an irreducibly “alien” unconscious’ within the neonate, thereby giving rise to a psychoanalytic anthropology in which ‘the radical heteronomy of the human subject’ is emphasised.⁷³ It is this primal interpenetration of the intrapsychic with the interpersonal that marks the instantiation of a wider process of cultural transmission through which the ‘contents’ of a particular enigmatic signification remain encrypted and opaque both to ‘sender’ and to ‘receiver’ alike. To summarise, my usage of the term ‘trace’ in this thesis is intended to denote the *encryption* of an esoteric *hieroglyph* into the semiotic register of the psychoanalytic via a process of *enigmatic signification*.

⁷¹ Ladson Hinton, ‘The Enigmatic Signifier and the Decentred Subject,’ *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 54 (2009), p. 185. See also Jean Laplanche, ‘The Theory of Seduction and the Problem of the Other,’ *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 78 (1997), pp. 653-666.

⁷² For a general overview of Laplanche’s ideas to which I am indebted, see Fletcher & Ray (eds.), *Seductions and Enigmas*, pp. 14-54.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 19, pp. 25-26.

As we shall see in chapter three, there are grounds for supposing that the significance of nineteenth-century psychical research in particular—and of ‘esoteric’ currents more generally—for the development of a specifically psychoanalytic conceptualisation of the ‘decentred’ human subject has suffered from a tendency to be consigned to the peripheries of psychoanalytic historiography.⁷⁴ However, before we can engage with such questions in more detail, it is necessary to set out a brief overview of the main developments in the academic study of Western esotericism so as to provide a proper context for evaluating the often neglected contributions made by the ‘occult’ in the development of psychoanalysis.⁷⁵

1.4. A very brief introduction to Western esotericism

It is impossible within the context of this thesis to provide a comprehensive account of the complex historiographical and theoretical disputes that have contributed to the development of Western esotericism as a distinct academic discipline. Consequently, a very brief outline of

⁷⁴ The subtle yet pervasive downplaying of the significance of the ‘occult’ in psychoanalytic historiography was amply illustrated by Ernst Jones in his highly influential 1953 biography of Freud. Commenting upon chapter XIV, which deals extensively with the topic of Freud’s occultism, Anna Freud wrote to Jones as follows: ‘It gave me the feeling that here you remained as an outside critic instead of seeing it with my father’s eyes... I have an idea that you would not have disagreed if you could have felt his feelings about the matter more fully’ [24/11/1955]—cited in Maria Pierri, *Sigmund Freud and The Forsyth Case: Coincidences and Thought-Transmission in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2022), p. 1. However, this exclusion of the ‘occult’ from the psychoanalytic ‘system’ can also be conceptualised as the manifestation of one of the former’s intrinsic attributes. As Kripal has observed, ‘The paranormal is marginalised because it *is* the marginal ... The paranormal is an anomaly that points *beyond* the system,’ Kripal, *Comparing Religions*, p. 244. Viewed from this perspective, is by no means an accident that psychoanalysis, parapsychology and esotericism have all been assigned a liminal role in the contemporary academy.

⁷⁵ The notion of ‘occultism’ was poorly articulated and heterogeneously misapplied throughout the early history of psychoanalysis, and so came to encompass a wide and disparate range of ostensibly ‘anomalous’ phenomena, including telepathy, astrology, theosophy, animal magnetism and clairvoyance. See Julia Gyimesi, ‘Introduction,’ *Imago Budapest*, 4 (2017), pp. 3-8 for more on this topic. In the estimation of Hanegraaff, the occult has in more recent years come to be seen ‘as a significant manifestation of modernity’—see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 9. For a helpful scholarly overview of the term, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Occult/Occultism,’ in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff et al, *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 884-889.

this rapidly evolving—and, at times, controversial—specialism within the history of religions will have to suffice.⁷⁶

It has been proposed that the origins of these various (contested) ‘traditions,’ ‘currents,’ ‘discourses’ or ‘*topoi*’ can be traced to a series of syncretic developments arising out of a range of ancient ‘heterodox’ spiritualities, such as Gnosticism, Hermeticism and Neoplatonism, that flourished within the Hellenistic world during the first centuries A. D. and which subsequently developed both within and across a range of cultures, including the Hellenistic, Judaic, Christian and Islamic. During the Renaissance, the rediscovery of the Hermetica and other associated ancient texts led to a renewed interest in ceremonial magic, astrology, alchemy and Kabbalah in scholarly circles. After the Reformation, these developments gave rise to movements such as Rosicrucianism, Christian theosophy and Freemasonry, each of which made specific contributions to the rise of the modern occult revival, whose exemplars included nineteenth-century spiritualism, Helena Blavatsky’s Theosophy and the various European magical orders of the fin de siècle. Significant twentieth-century esotericists include figures such as Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), George

⁷⁶ For useful historiographical and methodological overviews, see: Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Tim Rudbøg, *The academic study of Western esotericism: Early developments and related fields* (Copenhagen: Hermes Academic Press, 2013), Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and *Western Esotericism*. For a helpful overview of more recent developments in the field, see Egil Asprem & Julian Strube (eds.) *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2021). The following brief historiographical outline of the various Western esoteric ‘traditions,’ ‘currents,’ ‘discourses’ or ‘*topoi*’ is indebted to these sources. It is outside my current remit to enter fully into the debates concerning the comparative value of the various scholarly approaches employed to facilitate the academic study of the esoteric, other than to remark that each of these ‘schools’ or orientations comes freighted with its own particular matrix of methodological, ideological and ontological baggage, whose presence necessarily serves simultaneously to facilitate, circumscribe and define—at least to some degree—the subject of their investigations. These difficulties are further compounded when we consider the complex historical, linguistic, and conceptual entanglements of esotericism’s proximate analogues, which includes terms such as ‘mysticism,’ ‘occultism,’ ‘Gnosticism’ and ‘Hermeticism,’ each of which has attracted a small library of exegetical literature. These difficulties have led some scholars to view esotericism as an ‘umbrella term’ encompassing a wide and potentially quite disparate field that embraces a heterogeneous range of concepts, ideas and historical currents (Rudbøg, 2013, pp. 33-34).

Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866?-1949) and the founder of analytical psychology, C. G. Jung (1875-1961). Studies in contemporary esotericism have sought to extend these investigations by augmenting traditional historiographical approaches with a range of sociological, psychological and critical methodologies adapted to enhance our understanding of the multifaceted role of the esoteric within historical and contemporary cultures.⁷⁷

Wouter Hanegraaff has argued that the construction of Western esotericism as a distinct domain of academic inquiry can be traced back to attempts made during the Renaissance to establish an ‘ancient wisdom narrative,’ which sought to align philosophers such as Plato (427-347 BC) and Plotinus (204-270 AD) with mythological figures such as Hermes Trismegistus. However, during the latter part of the seventeenth century, Protestant German theologians set out to undermine this narrative as part of an agenda to ‘purify’ Christian teaching from the sources of ‘pagan’ contamination. It was this attempted exorcism of ‘pagan influences’ that contributed to the creation of a heterogeneous category of ‘rejected knowledge’ which came in time to provide the historiographical ‘substrate’ for the academic field now known as ‘Western esotericism’. Following the Enlightenment, derogatory categorisations of the ‘heretical’ were superseded by those of the ‘irrational’. Despite this shift in nomenclature, the underlying impetus remained that of separating the excluded ‘other’ from normative standards whose existence could thereby be reinforced and promulgated.⁷⁸ However, the historically situated nature of western esotericism also means that attempts to provide a precise definition remain problematic—at least to the extent that such efforts would necessarily entail the foreclosure of an open-ended historiographical

⁷⁷ See Egil Asprem & Kennet Granholm (eds.) *Contemporary Esotericism* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁷⁸ See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy* for the full account of this thesis.

horizon.⁷⁹ More ‘constructivist’ approaches have sought for a home in discourse analysis.⁸⁰ However, whilst the adoption of such methodologies has the potential to act as a bracing ‘antidote’ to the more extreme or naive variants of what has come to be referred to in the academy as ‘religionism,’ such radically ‘anti-essentialist’ strategies nonetheless run the risk—if too enthusiastically applied—of defining out of existence the very *topoi* that they originally set out to investigate, whilst simultaneously distorting the historiographical data via the too rigorous application of a methodologically-generated ‘ideological filter’.⁸¹ As Jeffrey Kripal has observed:

... it is just this kind of reductive materialism, usually joined to some retooled form of Marxism (it’s all economics and oppression) or Foucauldianism (it’s all discourse and power), that now defines so much of the study of religion. By so doing, the field has, in effect, denied its own subject matter, much as the fields of psychology and neuroscience have done with respect to the psyche and the mind, which they now more or less (mostly more) deny even exist ... Mircea Eliade ... had it exactly right when he wrote that, “The ‘sacred’ is an element in the structure of consciousness and not a stage in the history of consciousness” ... The sacred and the human are two sides of the same coin.⁸²

⁷⁹ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘The power of ideas: esotericism, historicism, and the limits of discourse,’ *Religion* 43, 2 (2013), p. 258.

⁸⁰ For a helpful overview of the various approaches discourse analysis currently applied to the study of esotericism, see Kennet Granholm, ‘Esoteric current as discursive complexes,’ *Religion* 43: 1 (2013) pp. 46-69.

⁸¹ Hanegraaff, ‘The power of ideas,’ pp. 254-255, p. 268 n. 32; Glenn Alexander Magee (ed.), ‘Editor’s introduction,’ *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. xx. For an exemplary illustration of a discourse analysis approach applied to esoteric *topoi*, see Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion*. The rubric of ‘religionism’ tends to be associated—often accompanied by a pejorative undertow—with the legacy of Mircea Eliade, Perennialism and the notion of religion as a *sui generis* phenomenon—see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, p. 127 n. 174.

⁸² Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible*, pp. 254-255.

In order to avoid the excesses arising from the application of a too stringent ‘reductionism,’ in tandem with the ‘grand narratives’ approach frequently ascribed to so-called ‘Perennialist’ approaches, the present account is orientated within a ‘critical realist’ hermeneutic, in which the perspectives opened up by terms such as ‘ontology,’ ‘ideology,’ ‘culture’ and ‘history’ are viewed as omnipresent and reflexively interdependent.⁸³ Moreover, it presumes that such rubrics are themselves subject to processes of *reciprocal* neurological and cultural mediation, in accordance with the findings of transdisciplinary approaches such as *neurotheology*.⁸⁴

While definitions of Western esotericism have been philosophically situated along a continuum ranging from ‘realism’ through to ‘nominalism,’⁸⁵ the first widely accepted scholarly definition of the term was formulated by the French esoteric scholar Antoine Faivre in 1992. Based upon an extensive study of Renaissance and early modern sources in particular, Faivre developed a typology consisting of four characteristics that he considered to be intrinsic to Western esoteric ‘forms of thought,’ namely those of correspondences, living nature, imagination/mediations and transmutation. In addition to these four intrinsic characteristics, he set forth two further non-intrinsic characteristics, which he termed rituals

⁸³ See Kevin Schilbrack, ‘Religions: are there any?’ *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, 4 (2010), pp. 1112-1138. See in particular the following: ‘My critical realism ... does not deny that “religion” is a product of the European *imaginaire*, nor does it claim that the term is ideologically innocent. On the contrary, it foregrounds the issue of historical context and the purposes of those who developed the terms. Nevertheless, it does not follow that the word is substantively empty or refers to nothing’ (p. 1132).

⁸⁴ At its simplest, the hybrid discipline of *neurotheology* can be thought of as the application of the findings from neurological research to inform our understanding of religious experience—see Andrew B. Newberg, *Principles of Neurotheology* (New York: Routledge, 2016). In particular, the ‘critical realist’ ontology outlined above is informed by Newberg’s ‘neurotheological hermeneutic’: ‘... the general functioning of the brain and its structure is amazingly universal on a gross level ... Of course, on the microscopic level, each brain is very different since the immense number of neuronal connections in the brain are dependent upon each person’s development and experiences ... our brain shapes the ways in which we can conceive of God and theology’ (ibid, pp. 84-85). See also Eugene d’Aquili & Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

⁸⁵ Hanegraaff, ‘The power of ideas,’ p. 258. For a defence of the use of the term ‘Western esotericism’ within a global context see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘The Globalization of Esotericism,’ *Correspondences* 3 (2015).

of transmission and the practice of concordance.⁸⁶ Faivre described esotericism as an ‘ensemble of spiritual currents in modern and contemporary Western history which share a certain *air de famille*, as well as the form of thought which is its common denominator’.⁸⁷ While Faivre’s definition has been subject to various criticisms since this time (indeed, he himself was subsequently to adopt a position of ‘methodological agnosticism’),⁸⁸ his account is nonetheless accepted by most Western esoteric scholars to have set the terms of reference against which most of the ensuing debates around questions of definition and methodology have subsequently taken place.

While Faivre’s schema has fallen out of favour in more recent times, Glenn Alexander Magee has sought to revive his approach by revitalising the underlying philosophical premises associated with Faivre’s original taxonomy.⁸⁹ In the course of his revised elaboration of Faivre’s typology, Magee puts forward a case for considering mystical *gnosis* to be the central theoretical construct applicable to the study of esotericism.⁹⁰ Magee considers his approach as steering a judicious course between the binary polarities of methodological agnosticism and the ‘religionist’ positions commonly ascribed to Perennialist schools of thought. He does so, in part, by reframing these debates in terms of a distinction he makes between those who consider the study of esotericism to constitute a means for obtaining access to fundamental truths about the universe and human nature; and those who regard such ambitions to be inherently incompatible with the requirements of scholarly ‘objectivity’.

⁸⁶ See Antoine Faivre & Jacob Needleman (eds.), *Modern esoteric spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) and Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western esotericism* (Albany: SUNY, 1994).

⁸⁷ Antoine Faivre, ‘Questions of terminology proper to the study of esoteric currents in modern and contemporary Europe,’ in: Antoine Faivre & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Western esotericism and the science of religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), p. 2.

⁸⁸ See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the academy*, pp. 334ff. for a more detailed account of these criticisms.

⁸⁹ I have given particular attention to Magee’s understanding of esotericism as I draw heavily upon his definition of the term in chapter five of this thesis.

⁹⁰ Magee, ‘Editor’s introduction,’ pp. xx-xxx. ‘Mysticism is *gnosis*: esotericism is *techné* (technique or art)...this *techné* is founded on *gnosis*’ p. xxx.

Magee argues that the tenets of historicism are not themselves ‘empirically verifiable,’ and observes that its assumptions are underpinned by an implicit methodological paradox whereby ‘its adherents claim to speak from a privileged, ahistorical perspective that historicism itself declares to be impossible’.⁹¹

While Magee acknowledges that Faivre’s account possesses certain limitations, he also considers the criticisms of his approach as made by Hanegraaff and Stuckrad to be ultimately unpersuasive, and concludes that Faivre’s typology is sufficiently sound in its essentials to constitute a starting point from which to embark upon a ‘deeper level of analysis’.⁹² Magee observes that Faivre’s criteria entail a quintessentially ‘qualitative’ approach to understanding that is shared also not only by esotericism but also by ancient philosophy more generally.⁹³ He considers such an approach to be fundamentally at variance with modern ideals of objectivity, which extend even to the discipline of modern psychology, wherein ‘strenuous efforts have been made to banish subjectivity’.⁹⁴ Using Faivre’s criteria as his starting point, Magee distinguishes four fundamental features he considers to be common to all esoteric currents, namely: a qualitative approach to understanding nature; a perceptual reliance on highly rarefied and very subtle modes of subjectivity; knowledge claims regarding other realities that are only accessible by these means; an acceptance of the authoritative nature of tradition. Magee sums up his own understanding of esotericism as follows:

⁹¹ Ibid., p. xxxiii, n. 28.

⁹² Op. cit., p. xxii, n. 14.

⁹³ Notably, Hanegraaff has highlighted in his most recent book the idea of ‘quality’ as constituting ‘arguably the most important and certainly the most neglected key term in the humanities,’ see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality and the Historical Imagination: Altered States of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p. 349, n. 180.

⁹⁴ Magee, ‘Editor’s introduction,’ p. xxiv.

“Esotericism” refers to a number of theories, practices and approaches to knowledge united by their participation in a premodern, largely pagan world-view. Central to this worldview is commitment to the idea of the unity of existence—that existence is an interrelated whole in which seemingly dissimilar things exist in qualitative correspondence and vibrant, living sympathy ... These correspondences are discovered through the cultivation of supernormal aspects of human subjectivity, especially of the imagination. Esotericists typically hold that such knowledge can be utilised to effect changes in the world or in the self through causal mechanisms that empiricism finds inexplicable (and, therefore, rejects as impossible). This commitment usually goes hand in hand with a belief that the same supernormal aspects of the subject can reveal the existence of other dimensions of reality, usually hidden from view.⁹⁵

While Magee believes that esotericism is characterised by a certain way of thinking that was prevalent throughout the ancient world, he also considers that its features remain ubiquitous to all times and places, and have been expressed under various guises, with ‘esotericism’ acting as only the most recent (and fashionable) of these nomenclatures. Although he applauds the efforts made by the historicists to rehabilitate major esoteric figures so that their ideas can be more adequately incorporated into intellectual history, he also extends his approbation to include the possibility that their philosophical contributions could have the potential to provide us with ‘a richer and more complete understanding of our world’.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. xxviii-xxix.

⁹⁶ Op. cit., p. xxxiv.

In a striking instance of conceptual metaphor deployed as a polemic intervention, Hanegraaff has proposed that ‘Studying Western esotericism is much like applying psychotherapy to the history of thought’.⁹⁷ One of the more recent methodological developments to which such a psychotherapeutically-informed insight might usefully be applied relates to the academic demarcations distinguishing competing methodological schools of thought, such as ‘methodological agnosticism,’ ‘reductionism,’ ‘discourse analysis’ and ‘religionism’.⁹⁸ However, it is possible to reframe such developments as entailing both a repetition and a re-figuration of the long-standing problem of academic *othering* that the academic discipline of Western esotericism originally set itself the task of rectifying. Such symbolic *re-enactments* are commonly referred to as *parallel processes* in the contemporary psychotherapeutic literature.⁹⁹ What is less commonly recognised is that these kinds of processes can also manifest in historiographical as well as clinical contexts since ‘historians, like therapists, unconsciously identify with their objects of study and thus unwittingly replicate the difficulties present in the object of study’.¹⁰⁰ Hence, we can sometimes encounter in some of the more polemic exchanges occurring within contemporary academic debate in Western esotericism, an occasional propensity to engage in the ‘othering’ of those interlocutors perceived to be of an ostensibly ‘religionist’ orientation. This is no more than to say that

⁹⁷ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Foreword: Bringing Light to the Underground,’ in: *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. vii. See also Hanegraaff, ‘Forbidden Knowledge,’ p. 250 n. 67; Hanegraaff, ‘The power of ideas,’ pp. 252-273.

⁹⁸ ‘So what I am actually doing ... is tracing the genealogies of *two* competing approaches to the study of religion: one that is based on the practice and internal logic of historical criticism, and another that follows the logic of religionism,’ *ibid*, p. 264. See also Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, pp. 357-358, in which he extends this binary division to occupy a triune field consisting of ‘methodological agnosticism,’ ‘religionism’ and ‘reductionist’ approaches. However, Asprem has identified the following three dominant approaches to defining esotericism, namely Faivre’s typology; Hanegraaff’s ‘methodological agnosticism’ and the discursive approach exemplified by the work of von Stuckrad—see Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment*, p. 547.

⁹⁹ ‘*Parallelism phenomena in psychoanalysis and supervision*: a number of psychoanalysts have noted that psychoanalytic candidates unconsciously enact with their supervisors the very problems with which they are struggling with their patients,’ Akhtar, *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, p. 202.

¹⁰⁰ Kleinberg, *Haunting History*, p. 63. See especially the following: ‘Paralleling occurs when therapists, in the supervision setting, unconsciously identify with their patients, enact this identification, and elicit responses from the supervisors that replicate the difficulties they themselves have encountered—as *therapists*—in the therapy’ H. K. Gediman & F. Wolkenfeld, cited in Kleinberg, *ibid*.

unconscious dynamics constitute an inevitable aspect of the reflexive interplay of reason and emotion in the development and implementation of historiographical methodologies and programmes.¹⁰¹ However, it is important to add by way of a caveat to this claim the observation that the presence of such processes in historiography does not thereby negate the possibility of a creative dialogue arising between theoretically divergent interlocutors as part of a wider shared commitment towards the development of an ever more rigorous and synoptic *tertium quid*.¹⁰² In this regard, it is notable that Hanegraaff has more recently adopted the rubric of *radical methodological agnosticism* to denote his revised approach to historiography, in which he distinguishes his own perspective from ‘religionist’ and ‘reductionist’ modes of research.¹⁰³ Although Hanegraaff’s previous prioritisation of ‘history’ over ‘theory’ has been subjected to criticism, his more recent adoption of an explicitly Gadamerian approach to hermeneutics appears to go some way towards addressing the concerns of his critics.¹⁰⁴ As he astutely observes:

The conclusion is that we must neither talk to the text nor sit back and wait for the text to talk to us; rather, the art of hermeneutics involves talking *with* the text and allowing it to talk with us. Texts, like their readers, have agency in the practice of conversation ... To perceive what *is* actually there, we must put ourselves on the line

¹⁰¹ ‘Psychoanalysis persists in its view that thinking is an emotional matter ... Emotions cause some thoughts to be overvalued or denied. Anxiety, guilt and pain lead to defences. Pleasure and excitement can be sought at the expense of reality,’ Michael Mercer, ‘Bearable or unbearable? Unconscious communication in management,’ in: John Gordon & Gabriel Kirtchuk (eds.) *Psychic Assaults and Frightened Clinicians: Countertransference in Forensic Settings* (London: Karnac, 2008), p. 64.

¹⁰² For an exemplary instance of just such a dialogue occurring between two leading contemporary scholars of esotericism (one the leading exponent of *methodological agnosticism*, the other an advocate for a position characterised as *academic gnosticism*), see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Leaving the Garden (in search of religion): Jeffrey J. Kripal’s vision of a gnostic study of religion,’ *Religion* 38 (2008), pp. 259-276 and Jeffrey J. Kripal, ‘Gnosissss-A response to Wouter Hanegraaff,’ *Religion* 38 (2008), pp. 277-279.

¹⁰³ Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality*, pp. 4-5. Hanegraaff describes his revised approach as being ‘broadly congenial to the radical empiricism associated with William James,’ *ibid*.

¹⁰⁴ ‘We should not reject theory to save our sources from oppression; what we need is more sophisticated and systematic theories in order to understand them better,’ Egil Asprem, ‘Some Methodological Notes on Esotericism and Marginality,’ in: Asprem & Strube (eds.) *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism*, p. 143.

and allow for the possibility that as scholars we may simply not know yet *what it would even mean to “understand” these things.*¹⁰⁵

A modified variant of Hanegraaff’s approach is employed in the conclusion to this thesis to inform a brief exegetical excursus into Grotstein’s *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences* (2000).

1.5. Towards a psychoanalytic parapsychology

According to Freud, the essentials of psychoanalytic theory can be reduced to an awareness of the importance of unconscious mental processes in human functioning, an acknowledgement of the phenomena of resistance and repression, and an acceptance of the importance of sexuality and the Oedipus complex—‘No one who cannot accept them all should count himself a psychoanalyst’.¹⁰⁶ However, the austere simplicity of Freud’s classical redaction of psychoanalytical theory stripped to its essentials failed to survive the lifetime of its founder. It is unnecessary in the present context to provide an in-depth account of the complex theoretical disputes that collectively constitute the contested history of what has become an essentially pluralistic endeavour. Nor is it necessary to determine whether these various theoretical developments are to be construed as tending towards a convergent—and possibly integrative—trajectory; or as entailing the deconstructing proliferation of increasingly fragmented theories that are ultimately incommensurable with regards to their

¹⁰⁵ Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality*, pp. 136-137. The latter part of this quotation alludes to Hanegraaff’s own attempts to engage with the ‘concept’ of ‘a supra-rational *gnosis* that can be accessed only by an enigmatic faculty called *nous*,’ *ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁶ Sigmund Freud, ‘Two Encyclopaedia Articles: (A) Psychoanalysis,’ (1923 [1922]) in: *Historical and Expository Works on Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin, 1993[1923] [SE XVIII, 1955, pp. 233-259]), p. 145.

respective theoretical commitments and assumed frames of reference.¹⁰⁷ While such questions are of undoubted theoretical importance, their significance nonetheless remains tangential to the central themes of this thesis. Consequently, the following account will limit itself to providing a highly selective outline of those aspects of psychoanalytic theory that are salient to its central preoccupations. It therefore begins with a brief summary of the features typically associated with a contemporary psychoanalytic model of the mind.¹⁰⁸ This account is subsequently extended to include Mayer's comparative analysis of the implications arising from the 'boundaried' and 'radically connected' theories of mind developed by Freud and Jung respectively. Mayer's account is further augmented with reference to her deployment of those findings from parapsychological research that have the potential to enhance our understanding of the more subtle and poorly understood communicative processes commonly encountered in psychoanalysis, such as 'unconscious communication,' 'empathy' and 'projective identification'.¹⁰⁹

Auchincloss has defined psychoanalysis as that:

¹⁰⁷ For a selection of standard texts on the history of psychoanalytic theories of mind, see Joseph Sandler et al, *Freud's Models of the Mind: An Introduction* (London: Karnac, 1997); Peter Fonagy & Mary Target, *Psychoanalytic Theories: Perspectives from Developmental Psychopathology* (London: Whurr, 2003); Jay R. Greenberg & Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Stephen A. Mitchell & Margaret J. Black, *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). For a representative selection of synthetic and integrative approaches to psychoanalytic models of the mind, see Fred Pine, *Drive, Ego, Object and Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Steven J. Ellman, *When Theories Touch: A Historical and Theoretical Integration of Psychoanalytic Thought* (London: Karnac, 2010); Elizabeth L. Auchincloss, *The Psychoanalytic Model of the Mind* (Arlington: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2015). For a critique of 'common ground' and pluralistic approaches to psychoanalysis, see André Green, 'The illusion of common ground and mythical pluralism,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 86 (2005), pp. 627-632. For a useful selection of papers discussing the 'ownership' of psychoanalysis viewed from a range of perspectives including the academic, historical, political and scientific, see Ann Casement (ed.) *Who Owns Psychoanalysis?* (London: Karnac, 2004). It has been proposed that there exist at least twenty contemporary psychoanalytic orientations/frameworks—see Victoria Hamilton, *The Analyst's Preconscious* (Hillsdale: The Analytic Press, 1996), p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ The following account is indebted to Auchincloss, *The Psychoanalytic Model of the Mind* and Britton, *Between Mind and Brain*.

¹⁰⁹ See Elizabeth L. Mayer, 'Freud and Jung: the boundaried mind and the radically connected mind,' *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 47 (2002), pp. 91-99. See also Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*.

... branch of psychology that deals most thoroughly and profoundly with understanding human behaviour as the result of the mind ... [it] attempts to organize our understanding of how mental phenomena such as feelings, thoughts, memories, wishes and fantasies affect what we experience and do ... the psychoanalytic model of the mind is an imaginary construction designed to represent a complex system ... that cannot be observed directly in its entirety. The purpose of any model is to represent a system in such a way that it is easier to talk about and easier to study.¹¹⁰

In Auchincloss's estimation, the majority of contemporary psychoanalytic clinicians tend to think of the mind as constituting an emergent property of the brain. This means that whilst the mind is viewed as being dependent upon the brain, its properties cannot be either described or conceptualised in terms appropriate to the brain alone. From a philosophical perspective, this implies that most clinicians are practicing *property dualists* (i.e. they assume that the mind emerges from the brain, whilst nonetheless distinguishing mind from brain for clinical purposes). Dependent upon one's perspective, this default position of property dualism might be thought of as a laudable example of conceptual flexibility employed in the face of clinical complexity. A less charitable reading might view it as a conceptual sleight-of-hand employed to disguise an obscure but troubling awareness that the mind may be more than a simple epiphenomenon of the brain.¹¹¹ Regardless of which of these viewpoints might be taken, Auchincloss is scrupulous in maintaining that until such times as there is a generally accepted integrative framework conjoining brain to mind, explanatory or causal statements lacking a clear evidential basis should be avoided. The implication arising from this is that—

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.4-5.

¹¹¹ For a trenchant yet nuanced account of the associated risks arising from the disavowal of 'public' from 'private' forms of psychoanalytic knowledge, see Elizabeth L. Mayer, 'Changes in Science and Changing Ideas about Knowledge and Authority in Psychoanalysis,' *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 65 (1996b), pp. 158-200.

for now at least—both realms should be treated as two distinct orders, each with their own particular language, modes of conceptualization and accepted levels of abstraction.¹¹²

Contemporary psychoanalysis is often construed to be an inherently pluralistic endeavour, with each model—whether topographical, structural, object-relational, self-psychological or Lacanian in terms of its orientation—adopting differing perspectives on mental functioning and the significance that should be ascribed to various mental phenomena. Auchincloss advocates employing a two-pronged strategy for the use of specific models, entailing the judicious deployment of a pluralistic approach, even whilst treating each of the psychoanalytic models encountered as a *de facto* totalising theory whenever the clinical occasion might appear to require this. While it is generally acknowledged that the concept of the unconscious lies at the heart of all psychoanalytic conceptualisations of the mind, its particular significance from a specifically psychoanalytic perspective lies not so much in its storage function, capacity for subliminal perception, or information processing abilities, but rather in the acknowledgement that thoughts and feelings existing outside of conscious awareness remain alive and active in terms of their subliminal influence upon our everyday experiences and decisions. While the details differ between the various psychoanalytic metapsychologies, Auchincloss's 'integrative' account proposes that all psychoanalytic models of the mind seek to address five core dimensions, namely those of topography, motivation, structure/process, development and psychopathology/treatment. Notably, Auchincloss makes positive reference to the use of historical and trans-cultural perspectives to help make sense of dream phenomena.¹¹³ She concludes her account with the following cautionary caveat:

¹¹² Auchincloss, *The Psychoanalytic Model of the Mind*, p. 101.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.102.

Not everyone agrees that integration of the various psychoanalytic models of the mind is either possible or wise ... For now, it is enough to say that we live in an era of psychoanalytic pluralism and that efforts at integration can be seen as efforts to undo this pluralism with a proposed synthesis that is experienced as “too prescriptive”... psychoanalytic model making should be an ongoing process.¹¹⁴

Ronald Britton begins his account of the various psychoanalytic theories of the mind with an acknowledgement of the emotional energies that underpin our more ostensibly theoretical commitments to any given model. While he observes that excessive tenacity in the retention of one's beliefs might imply an underlying conflict between the pleasure and reality principles, he also observes that the ‘provisional’ and ‘esoteric’ nature of our knowledge means that establishing the ‘measure of reality testing’ is an inherently complex endeavour, particularly when we recall just how difficult it is to learn from experience under circumstances that may require us to change our existing beliefs.¹¹⁵ These problems are further exacerbated by our difficulties in distinguishing ‘theories’ and ‘models’ from ‘descriptions’.¹¹⁶ Britton observes that Freud's understanding of brain/mind interaction bears close comparison with the ‘neutral monism’ of William James, whereby mind and matter are construed as differing phenomenal modifications of a shared underlying substantive reality. While Britton delimits the domain of brain neurology to the biological organ of the brain, the

¹¹⁴ Op. cit., pp. 255-256.

¹¹⁵ Britton, *Between Mind and Brain*, pp. xiv-xv.

¹¹⁶ ‘So it seems we bring to the psychoanalytic table our theories in the form of models, where they can be mistaken for descriptions of actual events or abstract, logical statements. In fact they are neither of these; they are the products of human imagination that organises experience into a shape that already exists in the human mind’ (ibid., p. 52). See also the following: ‘The formal Freud was strict in understanding his schemas as hypothetical constructs, educated suppositions, inferences. The informal Freud experienced them as living realities. For example, one of his last notes defines understanding mystical experiences as the ego's apprehension or perception of the id. Id, ego, superego: for Freud at once hypothetical concepts and psychic realities,’ Michael Eigen, *Under the Totem: In Search of a Path* (London: Karnac, 2016), pp. 16-17.

central nervous system, the autonomic nervous system and its associated hormonal activities, he observes that these biological boundaries cannot be applied to the mind. Hence, he concludes that while neuroscientific theories arise from the study of the brain, psychoanalytic theories arise from a study of the mind. Britton proposes that if William James's 'neutral monism' is accepted as a working hypothesis, then brain and mind can be conceptualised as existing along a theoretical axis in which brain is located at one end and mind at the other (the question as to *how* exactly they meet constitutes the 'hard problem' of consciousness as originally formulated by David Chalmers in 1995).¹¹⁷ While Freud began his researches at one end of this axis as a proponent of the mechanistic Helmholtz school of physiology, he subsequently abandoned his neurological project sometime between 1895 and 1900 in order to shift the focus of his work towards a study of the mind and its derivatives that would include dreams, literature, mythology, self-analysis and clinical practice as the basic materials for his researches. Although the terms *mind* and *mental* in Strachey's English Standard Edition of Freud's work are translated from the German *Psyche/psychisch* and *Seele/seelisch* largely interchangeably, the linguistic nuances that distinguish these terms nonetheless help to remind us that Freud's idea of *mind* has *soul* as its historical and conceptual antecedent.¹¹⁸

Mayer has proposed that at the heart of any psychoanalytic theory there lie two basic premises. The first asserts the power of love and sexuality while the second asserts the power of unconscious processes as intrinsic to the formation of human subjectivity.¹¹⁹ The existential consequences arising from these initial premises entail a complex array of unconscious conflicts that distort our capacity to give and receive love. Amidst the vast array

¹¹⁷ The difficulties arising from this still unsolved question are of a sufficient magnitude as to remind one of Sidney Harris's famous cartoon of two mathematicians discussing a complex tripartite equation in which the link between parts one and three consists solely of the words 'then a miracle occurs'.

¹¹⁸ Britton, *Between Mind and Brain*, pp. 6-8.

¹¹⁹ See Mayer, 'Freud and Jung: The boundaried mind and the radically connected mind,' pp. 91-99. The following account is indebted to this paper.

of psychological phenomena addressed by psychoanalytic theory there lies at their heart a fundamental debate concerning the degree of separation verses the degree of connectedness existing between individuals. Consequently, Freudian psychoanalysis—as exemplified, for example, by the quintessentially psychoanalytic phenomenon of transference—can be thought of as a theory concerned with separation and the formation of boundaries; while analytical psychology might conversely be construed to focus upon the principles of complementarity, non-locality and the nature of interconnectedness as exemplified in the Jungian concept of synchronicity. However, whilst it may follow that to be thoroughly grounded in either of these theories means to be simultaneously grounded within its tacit world view, the respective features of both theories nonetheless possess the potential to be conceptualised as complementary rather than antagonistic or competing:

The Freudian contribution to exploring new conceptualizations of mind lies ... largely in the territory of offering us a highly refined observational method that vastly extends our observational capacities. Jungian theory, on the other hand ... [makes] its primary contribution by laying out aspects of conceptual frameworks which can help us newly envision—so we can then further study—a human mind characterized by precisely the forms of radical connectedness that science is starting to suggest. As the two interface, we are likely to learn more not just about the mind, but also how the forms of thinking we’ve labelled as Freudian verses Jungian do indeed complement and extend each other in the clinical situation, as well as in other spheres.¹²⁰

Citing the physicist Werner Heisenberg, Mayer observes that the most beneficial developments in any discipline commonly occur where different lines of thought meet.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

Having argued for the emergence of a consensus that psychoanalysis is quintessentially a subjective and intersubjective endeavour, Mayer proceeds to make a strong case for psychoanalysts to constructively engage with the findings of parapsychological research as a potential source of empirical evidence for some of its most fundamental (albeit most poorly understood) concepts, such as ‘intuition,’ ‘empathic attunement’ and ‘unconscious communication’.¹²¹ Observing that it was Freud himself who originally established the potential importance of anomalous mental processes for clinical practice, Mayer goes on to advocate for a basic methodological attitude consisting of ‘... maximum open-mindedness as well as maximum scientific rigour’.¹²² Mayer summarises her goals as follows. Firstly, she wishes to draw attention to the fact that research into anomalous modes of communication exists. Secondly, she seeks to provide evidence regarding the rigour with which the best of this research has been conducted. Finally, she sets out to demonstrate its potential relevance for arriving at a more adequate conceptualisation of those subtle forms of non-verbal communication that constitute an intrinsic feature of psychoanalytic clinical practice.¹²³

Whilst Mayer’s speculations may appear to lie outside the defining ‘shibboleths’ of Freudian psychoanalysis as described at the beginning of this sub-section, there are nonetheless grounds for supposing that Freud himself may very well have been the first ‘psychoanalytic parapsychologist’.¹²⁴ This claim can be illustrated with reference to Freud’s dealings with the

¹²¹ See Elizabeth L. Mayer, ‘Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity of Clinical Facts,’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 77 (1996), pp. 709-737 as well as chapter six from her book *Extraordinary Knowing* for an in-depth exposition of the evidence Mayer has adduced in support of her argument.

¹²² Mayer, ‘Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity of Clinical Facts,’ p. 724. See also Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-24. Mayer’s book notably features many instances in which both patients and analysts have struggled (with varying degrees of success) to integrate their experiences of anomalous phenomena with prevailing cultural norms.

¹²⁴ See chapter three. This theme is revisited the concluding section to chapter four, which discusses the ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology’ of Nandor Fodor (1895-1964). The case for surmising the persistence of a parapsychological current within contemporary psychoanalysis is discussed once again in the conclusion to this thesis.

Italian ‘astrologer’ and ‘clairvoyant,’ Francesco Waldner.¹²⁵ In his booklet entitled *Mes Aventures surnaturelles* published in 1962, Waldner provided a touching account of a series of consultations he had with Freud during his time as a young man living in Vienna. It was during the course of these consultations (a central preoccupation of which appears to have concerned unresolved conflicts relating to his deceased father) that we encounter the following exchange as reportedly said by Freud to Waldner during the course of Waldner’s treatment: ‘You must take advantage of this, my boy. I don’t expect to live much longer and you really need my help if you want to avoid interference and keep your problems out of your visions’.¹²⁶ Whilst the following surmise is of a necessarily speculative cast, it is nonetheless possible to read Waldner’s account as providing a description of Freud utilising psychoanalysis as a means for enhancing his patient’s ‘paranormal’ capacities rather than as a technique with which to ‘exorcise’ them via a ‘reductive’ process of psychoanalytic ‘deconstruction’.

Having set out the methodological considerations that constitute the conceptual framework for this thesis, we can now move on to consider the role played in the formation of psychoanalysis by some of its ‘dark’ esoteric precursors.

¹²⁵ See Maria Pierri, *Occultism and the Origins of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Ferenczi and the Challenge of Thought Transference* (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 397-398.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

CHAPTER TWO: DARK PRECURSORS TO AN ESOTERIC PSYCHOANALYSIS¹²⁷

2.1. Introduction

In the last chapter a theoretical framework was set out for conceptualising some of the historical and cultural contexts that contributed to the formation of a ‘decentred’ psychoanalysis dialectally conjoined to an occlusive and enigmatic (esoteric) Other. The present chapter seeks to locate the origins of these ‘dark precursors’ within the various mesmeric, somnambulistic and hypnotic ‘currents’ arising out of the Christian Theosophical, German Idealist and Romantic ‘traditions’. It sets out to explore how these developments arose out of a complex genealogical matrix conjoining mesmerism, animal magnetism, artificial somnambulism and hypnotism, the overlapping features of which bear some comparison with the phenomenologically contiguous state of hypnagogia commonly experienced at the threshold of sleep.¹²⁸ However, it is important to preface any such claims

¹²⁷ ‘Thunderbolts explode between different intensities, but they are preceded by an invisible, imperceptible *dark precursor*, which determines their path in advance but in reverse ... every system contains its dark precursor ...’. Gilles Deleuze *Difference and Repetition* [trans. Paul Patton] (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 152.

¹²⁸ For an in-depth account of the research literature on alterations of consciousness, see Imants Barušs, *Alternations of Consciousness: An Empirical Analysis for Social Scientists* 2nd ed. (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2020). On the topic of hypnagogia, see the following: ‘Hypnagogic experiences are commonly defined as hallucinatory and quasi-hallucinatory events taking place in the intermediate state between wakefulness and sleep,’ Andreas Mavromatis, *Hypnagogia* (London: Thyrsos Press, 1987), p. 1. Mavromatis identifies a *hypnagogic syndrome* possessing seven characteristics that include: psychophysical relaxation; ‘passive volition’; parasympathetic predominance; decrease in exteroceptive and proprioceptive stimulation; psychological withdrawal; decreased arousal; need/intention to sleep/dream (p. 77). Notably, in Mavromatis’ estimation, ‘Several and disparate sources of evidence appear to suggest that hypnagogia is significantly conducive to paranormal events, that spontaneous psi events occur in experimental hypnagogia, that developing psychics experience an increase in hypnagogic phenomena, that hypnagogic visions might be an early form of clairvoyance, and that some hypnagogic images might be precognitive’ (p. 131). Parallels have been drawn between hypnagogia and hypnotic trance (pp. 219ff.). Reference is made to hypnagogic states in the writings of a diverse range of esoteric figures, including Iamblichus (245-325 AD), Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and P. D. Ouspensky (1878-1947) (*ibid.*, p. 4, pp. 100-103). For a lucid account of the phenomena of trance and hypnosis, see Barušs, *Alternations of Consciousness*, pp. 125-147.

with the caveat that ‘any attempt to make an epistemological object out of the trance was beset by its variability’.¹²⁹

Eva Pocs has observed that ‘ecstatic visionary experience ...[is]... widespread, commonplace and non-culture specific’.¹³⁰ Such ecstatic experiences can potentially cover a diverse range of cognitive and affective states, including those of trance, dream, hallucination, creativity, delusion and dementia.¹³¹ Notably, somnambulistic trance states were associated with a wide and—when viewed from a contemporary perspective—mysterious range of phenomena:¹³²

One of Mesmer’s many followers, a Marquis de Puységur, discovered that mesmeric treatment could induce a strange condition of sleeplike trance, in which many patients displayed remarkable ‘paranormal’ abilities and entered visionary states in which they claimed to communicate with spiritual beings on other levels of reality. This phenomenon, known as artificial *somnambulism*, has exerted an incalculable influence on the history of Western esotericism during the nineteenth century.¹³³

This chapter sets out a case for construing these mesmeric and somnambulistic practices as constituting a kind of cultural ‘conduit’ through which the ‘occult’ traditions of the fin de siècle became entangled with a nascent psychoanalysis. The concomitant confusions arising

¹²⁹ Sonu Shamdasani, ‘Psychologies as ontology-making practices: William James and the pluralities of psychological experience,’ in: Ann Casement and David Tracy (eds.) *The Idea of the Numinous: Contemporary Jungian and Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 12.

¹³⁰ Eva Pocs, cited in Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 78.

¹³¹ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch*, pp. 78-79. Commenting on the potential dangers associated with the breadth of the ‘altered states of consciousness’ concept, Hutton wryly observes that ‘The danger is that the umbrella may turn into a dustbin’ p. 79. See also Barušs, *Alterations of Consciousness*.

¹³² For an authoritative account of these phenomena, see Etzel Cardena, Steven Jay Lynn, and Stanley Krippner, *Varieties of Anomalous experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence* 2nd ed. (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2014).

¹³³ Hanegraaff, *Western esotericism*, p. 38.

from this entanglement marked psychoanalysis from its inception. As Henri Ellenberger has remarked:

The case of Breuer's celebrated patient Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim) actually belonged to those great magnetic diseases that were so much sought after by the early magnetizers. She had unique symptoms, directed her cure, explained it to the physician, and prophesied the date of its termination. Because she chose for her self-directed therapy the procedure of catharsis (which a recent book had made fashionable), Breuer believed that he had discovered the key to the psychogenesis and treatment of hysteria. It was a theoretical misconception and therapeutic failure, which, however, stimulated Freud towards the inception of psychoanalysis.¹³⁴

In order to map out the itinerary leading up to this confluence of disciplines and traditions, the chapter begins by highlighting the significance of the Silesian Christian Theosophist Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) for the subsequent fascination with mesmerism and animal magnetism in German Romantic and Idealist circles concerned with the *Nachseite der Natur* ('nightside of nature'). This fascination was exemplified by F.W.J von Schelling (1770-1831) in his posthumously published novel *Clara*; and by G.W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) through his indebtedness to a number of esoteric thinkers, most notably Boehme.¹³⁵ The ensuing vicissitudes arising out of these preoccupations are subsequently traced through the various 'esoteric' schools of mesmerism, animal magnetism and somnambulism that rose to prominence during the 18-19th centuries, the 'occult' excesses of which were ostensibly exorcised under the aegis of a medicalised 'hypnotism'. The chapter concludes with an

¹³⁴ Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, p. 892.

¹³⁵ See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 260-276.

abbreviated account of Justinus Kerner's monograph on Friederike Hauffe, *The Seeress of Prevorst*, which emphasises its importance, not only as one of the earliest psychiatric monographs, but as an exemplar of the phenomenon of *magnetic gnosis*, the attributes of which will be explored in more detail throughout the course of this chapter before being revisited again in chapter four.

2.2. The 'Three Worlds' of Jacob Boehme

Boehme...has mattered a great deal in our intellectual history. The interesting issue, though, is not whether we can in fact draw a direct line of influence ... but is rather the question of how a creative thinker like Boehme is used to create concepts adequate to circumstances after his own time ... The most interesting Boehme today is the one we don't know is there, the one who has become part of the backdrop against which other concepts strive for manifestation.¹³⁶

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) considered Boehme's writings to constitute 'one of the most profound and strangest systems of Western thought,' while the cultural critic Walter Benjamin deemed him to be 'one of the greatest allegorists'.¹³⁷ One scholarly book-length study has gone so far as to propose that Boehme '... through some faculty of super-sensory vision, was able to behold the principle behind the creation and evolution of the cosmos'.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Bruce B. Janz, 'Conclusion: Why Boehme Matters Today,' in: Ariel Hessayon and Sarah Apetrei (eds.) *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme: Four Centuries of Thought and Reception* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 281, p. 284.

¹³⁷ Cited in Ariel Hessayon and Sarah Apetrei, 'Introduction: Boehme's Legacy in Perspective,' in: *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme*, pp. 1-2.

¹³⁸ Joscelyn Godwin, Foreword to Basarab Nicolescu, *Science, Meaning and Evolution: The Cosmology of Jacob Boehme* (New York: Parabola Books, 1991), p. 3.

Such apparently hyperbolic claims are nonetheless of a piece with the exalted and visionary nature of Boehme's writing:

One world is in the other, and all are only one ... For the earthly body which thou bearest is one body with the whole kindled body of this world, and thy body qualifieth, mixeth or uniteth with the whole body of this world; and there is no difference between the stars and the deep, as also between the earth and thy body: it is all one body. This is the only difference, thy body is a *son* of the whole, and is in itself as the whole being itself is.¹³⁹

Andrew Weeks has argued not only that Boehme's 'mystical speculation seems to anticipate psychoanalysis,' but that, in his mytho-poetic account of the 'dissociation' of Lucifer from God, we can discern the origins of the nascent philosophical *subject*:¹⁴⁰

The descent into the depths of the spirit attributed to the writings of Jakob Böhme is interpreted ... as an expression of the principle of *subjectivity*. The withdrawal into the depth of the subject ... is thus presented as an alternative to the exploration of the outside world ... Lucifer's rising up against God is ... the act through which the *I*, subjectivity, emerges for the first time.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Jacob Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum* and *Aurora*, cited in Nicolescu, *Science, Meaning and Evolution*, p. 45

¹⁴⁰ Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany: SUNY, 1991), p. 181.

¹⁴¹ Cecilia Muratori, *The First German Philosopher: the Mysticism of Jakob Böhme as interpreted by Hegel* (New York: Springer, 2016), p. 188; p. 234.

Analogous attempts have been made to construe Boehme's Theosophy as a precursor to Freudian psychoanalysis.¹⁴²

The dark-world and the light-world can be compared to the *id* and the *ego*. These and other parallels have attracted scholarly comparisons with Freudian psychoanalysis ... Boehme was led by his own premises to draw the conclusions which resemble those of psychoanalysis.¹⁴³

While there is no evidence to suggest that Freud ever undertook a deliberate study of Boehme's work, traces of Boehme's legacy can nonetheless be discerned both within the corpus of Freud's writings as well as more broadly across the wider cultural and intellectual milieu within which he participated.¹⁴⁴ The main conduits for the transmission of Boehme's ideas across the wider Germanic culture can be found within the influence that his writings had upon the writers and philosophers of the Romantic period from whose works Freud's own writings were to take at least a portion of their inspiration.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Gordon E. Pruett, 'Will and Freedom: Psychoanalytic themes in the work of Jacob Boehme,' *Studies in Religion* 6:3 (1976-1977), pp. 241-251.

¹⁴³ Weeks, *Boehme*, p. 181.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, the humorous allusion made to Boehme in: Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: Pelican, 1976), p. 128 [SE. Vol. VIII 1960 (1916)]. See also the reference made to Boehme's 'paranoid system' in A. Kielholz, 'On the Genesis and Dynamics of Inventor's Delusion,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 5 (1924), p. 451. Nonetheless, it remains the case that the pages in the only volume in Freud's library devoted specifically to Boehme's work remained uncut during his lifetime—see *Freud's Library: A Comprehensive Catalogue* [book and CD-ROM] compiled and edited by J. Keith Davies and Gerhard Fichtner (The Freud Museum: London and Tübingen edition discord, 2006) vol. 1992. However, in the light of trenchant criticisms that were subsequently directed towards Kielholz's writings on Boehme, this inadvertent negligence on Freud's part may have constituted a fortunate oversight—see Robert F. Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling: The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809-1815* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977), p. 35 n.10.

¹⁴⁵ See Paola Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and its Appropriation of Jacob Boehme* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999). In Mayer's estimation, 'only Friedrich Schlegel and Schelling achieved an active reception of Böhmist material in their philosophical writings' (p. 6). On the cult of *Bildung* (a concept concerned with the combined ideals of education, development and personal cultivation) in Freud's Vienna, see Joel Whitebook, *Freud: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 71-75. On Freud's debt to Romanticism, see Madeline and Henri Vermorel, 'Was Freud a Romantic?' *The International Review of Psychoanalysis* 13 (1986), pp. 15-37.

Boehme's texts constituted a vital nexus through which the Medieval and Renaissance symbolisations of a transcendental *Spiritus* were reconfigured following the Enlightenment into a self-concept oriented around intramundane and secularised modes of expression.¹⁴⁶

Within this context of late Renaissance magico-mystical movements, Boehme ... was the one who provided the underlying theological justification for the redirection of religious experience. His symbolization of an evolving divine Being and of the theosophic process of reality as a whole was precisely the foundation required for a depiction of the movement towards Innerworldly fulfilment. Moreover, it was Boehme, who was probably the most important transmitter of these ideas within modern intellectual history. The mytho-speculative mysticism of the Renaissance was received primarily in its Behmenist formulation by the later generation of Romantic and Idealist thinkers. It was his representation of the unfolding dialectical process that proved of most enduring influence, both in its original theological exposition and in its subsequent secular transformation.¹⁴⁷

Once orientated within this particular historio-conceptual matrix, it becomes possible to construe the complex web of cultural and ideological tensions active within the mytho-speculative *Spiritus* of the Medieval and Renaissance periods as indirectly contributing to the formation of a secularised, psychoanalytical 'trinity' consisting of *id*, *ego* and *super-ego*.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ For a classic account of these developments, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁴⁷ David Walsh, *The Mysticism of Innerworldly Fulfillment: A Study of Jacob Boehme* (Gainesville, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1983), pp. ix-x.

¹⁴⁸ As Kirschner has remarked, '... for Boehme (arguably) and for subsequent thinkers, the discourse of external cosmology starts to look as if it really is a symbolic language of the self,' Suzanne R. Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 147 n. 54.

By the time we arrive at the Romantic period, it is possible to discern a genealogical trajectory originating within the Medieval-Renaissance *Imago Dei* whose conceptual itinerary leads through the Baroque and early modern periods, before arriving at an intellectual ‘terminus’ entailing the Enlightenment apotheosis of an immanentized ‘inner light of reason’. In essence, powers hitherto attributed to a transcendental divinity were reconstituted to provide the components for the nascent subject of depth psychology.¹⁴⁹ Notably, these developments did not lead to the jettisoning of the ‘magico-mystical’ characteristics previously associated with the Divine Ground, so much as their encrypted re-instantiation—albeit in an occluded and attenuated fashion—in a manner analogous to the *Gnostic metalepsis* theorised by Cyril O’Regan, the constituent features of which are described further below. Hence, we find that:

Boehme shifts the locus of transcendence inwards, into the human psyche and the hidden inner life of the world ... The dark fire-world and the angelic light world, good and evil, heaven and earth, inner and outer, eternity and time, are said to be ‘in one another like a single thing’.¹⁵⁰

On the basis of Boehme’s own writings, it is possible to speculate that the core of his theosophy may—to some extent at least—have originated within the experiential crucible of what Ellenberger has termed a ‘creative illness,’ the distinguishing features of which bear comparison with the ‘initiatory trials’ endured by many of the founding figures of the dynamic psychiatries.¹⁵¹ However, before we can review such evidence as might be adduced

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 152, p. 185. See also Susanne Edel, ‘Compatibility of the “Inner Light” of Mystics and Reason: Leibnitz’s Engagement with Jacob Böhme,’ *Aries* 18:1 (2018), p.80.

¹⁵⁰ Andrew Weeks, ‘Radical Reformation and the Anticipation of Modernism in Jacob Boehme,’ *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme*, p. 50; pp. 53-54.

¹⁵¹ See Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, pp. 447-448, pp. 672-673.

in support of such a contention, it will be useful to begin with a very brief outline of the conceptual ‘architecture’ of Boehme’s ‘theophany’.

It has been justly observed that Boehme’s writings are likely to prove ‘virtually unreadable’ to anyone unfamiliar with the basic world-view of Renaissance esotericism, with their associated emblematic and typological modes of representation and expression.¹⁵² Moreover, while Boehme’s ideas were to have a profound and lasting effect upon the development of German Idealism and beyond, it would nonetheless constitute an anachronistic misreading to interpret his writings as constituting either a failed attempt to create a philosophical ‘system,’ or as providing a *naïve* ‘psychological’ description of his reportedly ‘mystical’ experiences. Boehme’s writings have been described as a Baroque hierophany depicting ‘... the sacramental and absolute mystery of presence and transcendence ... Each part contains, or attempts to contain, the whole’.¹⁵³ Hence, we find beneath its ornate literary carapace that an experiential substrate of ‘mystical’ encounter is nonetheless discernible. As Arthur Versluis has observed:

Boehme emphasises his own spiritual authority and direct Gnostic experience. When a secondary author contravenes these claims, he effectively places himself above his subject, claiming in effect to know more than Boehme about Boehme’s claims to knowledge. Such implied scholarly claims of supervenience of their subjects come freighted with their own issues.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Weeks, *Boehme*, pp. 174-175.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 100, p. 170. See also Weeks, ‘Radical Reformation and the Anticipation of Modernism in Jacob Boehme,’ p. 48. For a general overview of Boehme’s influence upon German Romanticism, see Ernst Benz, *The Mystical Sources of German Romantic Philosophy* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 1983).

¹⁵⁴ Arthur Versluis, ‘The place of Jacob Boehme in Western Esotericism,’ in: Hessayon and Apetrei (eds.) *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme*, p. 265. One commentator has concluded that in relation to Boehme’s writings, ‘... each person who reads him would be affected according to their own capacities,’ in: Nigel Smith, ‘Did Anyone Understand Boehme?’ *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme*, p. 101.

A very brief summary of the relevant elements of Boehme's teachings can now be provided.¹⁵⁵ According to Weeks:

The overall paradigm (if it can be called that) draws upon meteorological, astrological, alchemical, mechanical, and psychic prototypes. It soon becomes apparent that all these references are subordinated to the overriding theosophical and metaphysical context. The seven qualities are a figure of the Trinity and of the three principles as the *dark-world* (later: "fire-world"), the *light-world*, and *this world* (which is formed in the middle, where the first and second principles overlap).¹⁵⁶

While debates continue on how best to categorise Boehme's writings, there nonetheless exists a growing consensus that his theosophical texts inhabit a broad conceptual spectrum spanning the mystical, the philosophical and the esoteric.¹⁵⁷ Boehme's access to the Paracelsian tradition (already firmly established in his home town of Görlitz at the time of his birth) is evident from the many alchemical references contained throughout his work. Moreover, it has been proposed that his friend and disciple Dr Balthasar Walther (1558-c. 1630)—who was himself a Paracelsian—could have acted as a conduit for the Kabbalistic motifs that pervade Boehme's writings.¹⁵⁸ The overarching philosophical significance of Boehme's ideas for future thinkers have been aptly summarised in the following terms:

¹⁵⁵ This account is indebted to the following sources: Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 87-104; Weeks, *Boehme*; Pierre Deghaye, 'Jacob Boehme and his Followers,' in Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (eds.) *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 1993), pp. 210-247. For Boehme's own evaluation of his writings, see his 'Letter to an Enquirer' (1621) in Waterfield, *Jacob Boehme*, pp. 78-80.

¹⁵⁶ Weeks, *Boehme*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁷ Versluis, 'The place of Jacob Boehme in Western Esotericism,' p. 271. See also Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*, pp. 1-56.

¹⁵⁸ Weeks, *Boehme*, p. 30. On the difficulties associated with determining the true nature and extent of Kabbalistic influences in Boehme's writings, see Leigh T. Penman, 'Boehme's Intellectual Networks and the

Boehme left to philosophy a first principle which becomes creative by generating its own contrary, which it then proceeds to reconcile to itself. He left also the compelling vision of a fallen universe which is constituted throughout by an opposition of quasi-sexual contraries, at once mutually attractive and repulsive, whose momentary conciliations give way to renewed attempts at mastery by the opponent powers, in a tragic conflict which is at the same time the very essence of life and creativity as well as the necessary condition for sustaining the possibility of progression back to the strenuous peace of the primal equilibrium. The motion into which all things are thus compelled is a circular one, like that of the self-devouring serpent.¹⁵⁹

There has been much debate—often of a kind as to create more heat than light—as to whether, or to what extent, Boehme’s writings can be thought of as ‘gnostic’.¹⁶⁰ Many of these discussions have tended to founder from the outset due to the inability of the various interlocutors to arrive at an agreed consensus concerning what exactly it is that the rubric of ‘gnostic’ is intended to convey.¹⁶¹ Such disputes can be at least partly attributed to the proliferate nature of the early gnostic teachings. Cyril O’Regan, in a theoretically sophisticated—albeit arguably tendentious—reading of Boehme’s work, defines Gnosticism

Heterodox Milieu of his Theosophy, 1600-1624,’ in Hessayon and Apetrei (eds.), *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme* pp. 66-68.

¹⁵⁹ M. H. Abrahams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 162.

¹⁶⁰ For a helpful overview of these debates, see Roelof van den Broek, ‘Gnosticism I; Gnostic Religion,’ in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff et al. (eds.) *Dictionary of Gnosticism and Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 403-416.

¹⁶¹ It is notable that psychoanalysis itself has been described as constituting an essentially ‘gnostic’ endeavour: ‘Freudianism is...most compatible with a basically gnostic view of reality: the human subject is at home neither in nature nor in its own body, and must reconfigure its environment in order to cope. Sanity is a tragic adjustment to a reality that is, from a human perspective, intolerable’. S. J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 183. *Contra* O’Regan, McGrath does not consider Boehme to be a gnostic due to ‘his emphasis on embodiment as perfection. Nothing could be stranger to ancient gnosticism than to hold such a view,’ *ibid*, p. 50.

as ‘... the haunting of a Christian discourse by its *other*,’ which in this instance he prototypically identifies as originating in second-century Valentinian Gnosticism.¹⁶² O’Regan associates Valentinian Gnosticism in particular with the instantiation of the hermeneutic trope of *metalepsis*, which he defines as denoting ‘... the phenomenon of a complex disfiguration-refiguration of biblical narrative, or any first-order interpretation of it,’ a procedure which he considers to be descriptively typical of Boehme’s overall theosophical project.¹⁶³ However, while O’Regan’s exegesis is deeply informed by a wide knowledge of both the primary Gnostic texts and their associated secondary literature, his overall approach is in many respects indebted to Eric Voegelin’s (1901-1985) appropriation and extension of the term to denote a complex historical development entailing ‘transcendentalizing’ (Valentinian), ‘immanentizing’ (Marx) and ‘contemplative’ (Schelling and Hegel) ‘gnostic’ variants, in which the cognitive mastery of reality is assumed to be achievable.¹⁶⁴

Aurora (1612) was Boehme’s first published work. Its importance was subsequently acknowledged by Schelling and Hegel in particular and by the circle of Jena Romantics more generally.¹⁶⁵ Written after a twelve year period of gestation, *Aurora*’s origins were to a large extent indebted to a period of ‘creative illness,’ which Boehme experienced during his earlier

¹⁶² Cyril O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme’s Haunted Narrative* (Albany: SUNY, 2002), p. 5.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ See Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* [with a Foreword by Dante Germino] (London: University of Chicago Press, ([1952] 1987), pp. 107-189 for a detailed account of Voegelin’s usage of the term. For a trenchant critique of O’Regan’s deployment of the Voegelinian analysis of ‘gnosticism’ in his study of Boehme, see Arthur Versluis, *The New Inquisitions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 69-84. For a more measured rebuttal, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘On the Construction of “Esoteric Traditions”,’ in Antoine Faivre & Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.) *Western Esotericism And The Science of Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 29-36. With regards to the question of Boehme’s purported ‘Gnosticism,’ It may be worth noting in passing that Boehme himself asserted that he ‘... never desired to know anything of the Divine Mystery’—see Waterfield, *Jacob Boehme*, p. 63. However, for the sake of balance it is also worth observing that as far back as 1835 Ferdinand Christian Bauer had described Hegel as a ‘modern’ gnostic and remarked in this context upon his philosophical contiguity to his precursor, Jacob Boehme. See Glenn Alexander Magee, ‘Hegel’s Reception of Jacob Boehme,’ in: Hessayon and Apetrei (eds.) *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme*, p. 240.

¹⁶⁵ Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*; Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*.

years, the effects of which were to subsequently act as the catalyst for an even more profound theophany:

... I at last fell into a severe melancholy and sadness at the sight of the great depths of the world with its sun and stars, clouds, rain and snow. I regarded in my spirit the great creation of this world. In it, I found evil and good in all things, love and anger ... Moreover, I regarded the tiny little spark that is the human being and considered what it amounted to before God ... This caused me to grow gravely melancholy and deeply troubled ... The devil ... without pause inspired me with heathenish thoughts about which I prefer to remain silent ... in this deeply troubled state I lifted up my spirit ... at last, after several firm assaults, my spirit broke through the gates of hell and into the innermost birth of the divinity, there to be embraced by love as a bridegroom embraces his beloved bride. As for my exultation of spirit, I cannot convey it in writing or speech.¹⁶⁶

In *Aurora*, Boehme set out to expound his speculations concerning the divine substance, *Salitter* (a term possibly based upon his observations concerning the refined and unrefined forms of niter); the ‘qualities’ of God as active principles in the world; the notion of a cosmos interpenetrated by seven source-spirits; and the existence of an angelic realm.¹⁶⁷ The striking septenary structure of his theosophical speculations integrate features taken from popular astrology with elements adapted from alchemical lore as part of a highly idiosyncratic

¹⁶⁶ Jacob Boehme, *Aurora (Morgen Röte im auffgang, 1612) and Ein gründlicher Bericht or A Fundamental Report (Mysterium Pansophicum, 1620)* with a Translation, Introduction, and Commentary by Andrew Weeks and Günther Bonheim in Collaboration with Michael Spang as Editor of *Gründlicher Bericht* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 549-551. See Weeks, *Boehme* pp. 35-60 for an exemplary account of the genesis of Boehme’s theophanic vision.

¹⁶⁷ Nicolescu has argued that: ‘Boehme’s seven qualities are the intermediate, active, informational energies which give shape to all the various levels of reality,’ Nicolescu, *Science, Meaning and Evolution*., p. 28. For a more extensive account of this topic, see Weeks, *Boehme*, pp. 55-59.

attempt to articulate relations between the natural, human and divine worlds. However, it is in its treatment of the fundamental structures of ‘reality,’ as encoded in the principles of spatiality, temporality, and subject-object relations, that the revolutionary originality of *Aurora* is most in evidence:

To the extent that *Aurora* already surmounts the limits of pictorialism, it does so by developing a visionary language. The correspondences which dissolve objects also restructure the representation of reality ... Eventually, spatial relationships are contorted into graphically inconceivable spiritual equivalents, as when the prepositions, “*in sich aus gehen*,” are combined in order to express a movement of spirit which unfolds outwards by going into itself ... The net effect of his usage is the integration of all facets of experience in a non-hierarchical vision of the world: a vision in which spatial, moral, and metaphysical precepts are related in a new and more complex manner. Angels are explained by the same design that accounts for metals or for wild flowers. The angelic and natural orders reveal that variety can flourish in harmony.¹⁶⁸

In the *Three Principles of Divine Being* (1619), Boehme incorporated the septenary ‘holographic’ structures of *Aurora* into a complex Trinitarian framework consisting of the ‘dark world’ of the Father, the ‘light world’ of the Holy Spirit, and a ‘middle world’ in which the principles of Christ and Satan are in conflict with each other.¹⁶⁹ It is in the midst of the tensions existing across these three ‘worlds’ that human beings are enjoined to work out their

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Many of [Boehme’s] writings are only superficially structured as treatises. They are more like great series of thematic cycles and epicycles, dominated by briefer expositions, each of which treats its topic by bringing the literary equivalents of emblematic symbols to bear upon it. Each part contains, or attempts to contain, the whole’. Weeks, *Boehme*, p. 170.

salvation. However, while *Aurora* focuses upon the macrocosmic realms of theogony and cosmogony, *Three Principles of Divine Being* elaborates a corresponding microcosm that sets out a ‘... cosmogony of will with its drives, emergent spirit, and growth ... [to create] ... a map of the soul’s ascent’.¹⁷⁰

In *De Signatura Rerum* (1622), Boehme expounded his theory of *signatures* as the unfolding of the concealed inner life of all things in the context of a cosmic process of divine panentheistic emanation into the created universe. It constituted yet a further elaboration of a key insight of Boehme’s: namely, that spiritual truths must be experienced directly, and not merely via the reductive mediation of an immanentizing reason:

All whatever is spoken, written, or taught of God, without the knowledge of the signature is dumb and void of understanding; for it proceeds only from an historical conjecture, from the mouth of another, wherein the spirit without knowledge is dumb, but if the spirit opens to him the signature, then he understands the speech of another.¹⁷¹

While Weeks has put forward a carefully nuanced argument to support the contention that Boehme’s visionary experiences should not be thought of as fundamentally separate from his other sources of creative inspiration, it remains nonetheless difficult not to conclude that it was precisely these spiritual illuminations that constituted the central inspiration for all of his subsequent literary and spiritual activities.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*, p. 96.

¹⁷¹ Boehme, *De Signatura Rerum*, cited in Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom’s Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (Albany: SUNY, 1999), p. 15.

¹⁷² Weeks, *Boehme*, p. 3.

In this my earnest Christian seeking and desire ... the gate was opened unto me, that in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at a university ... For I saw and knew the Being of all Beings, the Byss ... and Abyss ... also the birth or eternal generation of the holy Trinity; the descent, and original of the world, and of all creatures, through the divine wisdom: I knew and saw myself in all three worlds; namely, the divine, angelical, and paradisical world and then the dark world...and then thirdly, the external and visible world ... Thus now I have written, not from the instruction of knowledge received from men, not from the learning or reading of books; but I have written out of my own book which was opened in me. I have no need of any other book.¹⁷³

Boehme's theosophy manifests itself as a pre-eminently *visionary discipline* founded upon a 'psychology of the imagination,' through which cures for the illnesses of the psyche are to be sought through the appropriate 'correction of the imagination'.¹⁷⁴ Consequently, his work emphasises the therapeutic value of 'penetrating the astral,' which he defines as a process of moving beyond the personal imaginings, fantasies and emotional currents generated by the 'astral cloud,' in order to facilitate the individual's entrance into a more profound spiritual reality.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, this movement into a 'beyond' simultaneously entails a 'descent' into the *Ungrund* or 'abyss':

God is in himself the *Ungrund*, as the first world, about which no creature knows anything, for it [the creature] stands with its body and spirit in the ground alone: even God would therefore not be manifest [*offenbar*] to himself in the *Ungrund*; but His

¹⁷³ Boehme, *A Letter to an Inquirer*, in Waterfield, *Jacob Boehme*, pp. 63-66.

¹⁷⁴ Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.25.

wisdom has from eternity become His ground [*Grund*], for which the eternal will of the *Ungrund* has lusted, from which the divine imagination has arisen ...¹⁷⁶

While attempts have been made to elicit parallels between the Behmenist *Ungrund* and the Freudian *id*, such efforts have tended either to simplify or simply ignore the historio-conceptual terrain that has to be traversed before such comparisons can legitimately be made.¹⁷⁷ Consequently, the following sub-section sets out to summarise the significance of Boehme's ideas for the development of German Romantic and Idealistic depictions of the 'nightside' of human nature, with particular reference to their role as precursors to the drive-haunted unconscious postulated by Freudian psychoanalysis.

2.3. A Romantic Interlude

It is outside my remit to provide an in-depth overview of the rich and complex range of scholarly and literary forms that converge under the rubric of *German Romanticism*.¹⁷⁸ However, some brief background to this term will nonetheless be useful as a means for contextualising the role played by Romanticism as a conduit for esotericism in psychoanalysis.

¹⁷⁶ Boehme, 'On the Incarnation of Jesus Christ,' cited in Weeks, *Boehme*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Pruett, 'Will and Freedom,' in which intriguing (but ultimately tendentious) parallels are drawn between Freud's concepts of eros and thanatos and their purportedly Behmenist counterparts. See Weeks, *Boehme*, p. 148 for a scholarly exposition of the Boehme's use of the term *Ungrund*.

¹⁷⁸ For a helpful initial orientation to this field, see Nicolas Saul (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* (New York; Cambridge, 2009). See also Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* for a classic exposition of the subject.

The first thing to be remarked upon is the inherent difficulty in establishing a consensus regarding how a ‘movement’ such as Romanticism, which was both complex and diffuse with regards to its antecedents, exemplars and successors, might be defined with any degree of precision.¹⁷⁹ In this respect, M. H. Abram’s description of Romanticism as an ‘expository convenience’ can at least be seen to possess the benefits of clarity and brevity.¹⁸⁰ Within the ambit of early German Romanticism, we encounter an amalgam of cultural milieus—both complementary and oppositional with regards to their effects—that included influences as diverse as Pietism, the Enlightenment, Weimar Classicism and *Sturm und Drang*. With regards to its broader context, the more oblique influence of several ‘revolutions’ can be discerned, including those of the American, the French, and the industrial revolution, as well as the epistemological ‘Copernican Revolution’ inaugurated by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Although Romanticism has often been construed as developing out of a critique of Enlightenment values, it constituted a critique whose capacities were nonetheless honed under the aegis of the critical ideals of the Enlightenment.¹⁸¹ At its apogee, Romanticism ‘created an anthropology, a cosmology and a theology all rolled into one’.¹⁸² Consequently, whilst it is necessary to remain cognizant of the genre distinctions demarcating Romantic literature from German Idealist philosophy, it is equally important to conceptualize their relations as constituting complementary facets of a greater interdependent whole.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Kant was ‘overtly suspicious of the idea that concepts can be strictly defined,’ see Andrew Bowie, ‘Romantic Philosophy and Religion,’ in: Saul (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, p. 175.

¹⁸⁰ For a critical review of this debate, see Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 153-156. In its essentials, Lovejoy’s classic essay ‘On the Discrimination of Romanticisms’ (1948) argued that the term was so complex and diffuse with respect to its proliferating meanings that its value in practice was at best debateable and at worst negligible.

¹⁸¹ See Azade Seyhan, ‘What is Romanticism, and where did it come from?’ in: Nicholas Saul (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 2; pp. 7-8.

¹⁸² Vermorel and Vermorel, ‘Was Freud a Romantic?’ p. 16.

¹⁸³ ‘Like many Romantic ideas, animal magnetism was a theory of everything,’ Matthew Bell, *The German Tradition of Psychology in Literature and Thought 1700-1840* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 173. For a helpful overview of the relations between Romantic literature and German Idealist philosophy, see Terry Eagleton, *Culture and the Death of God* (London: Yale University Press, 2015) chapters two and three. See especially the following: ‘... in its reflections on the unfathomable depths of the subject, Idealism looks towards Romanticism, from which, once more, it can often be distinguished only by the slimmest of borders.

Despite the disparaging intent of T. E. Hulme's *aperçu* that Romanticism was merely 'spilt religion,' his remark nonetheless aptly encapsulates the role played by the 'natural supernaturalism' of Romanticism as a cultural compromise formation mediating between the Christianity of the Medieval-Renaissance periods and the secular cultures of modernity, post-modernity and beyond.¹⁸⁴ In many respects, the tensions that were to shape this trajectory were initially articulated by—and subsequently encoded within—the diffuse network of meanings that came to accrue around the competing conceptualisations that circulated around the rubric of the *unconscious*:

Many of these languages of the unconscious tend towards the overtly religious or metaphysical—at times the unconscious signals nothing less than the immanent and mysterious power of a divine creator, or of 'nature' or the 'absolute' which come to stand in for this in only partly secularised ways. But equally, and from early on in the [19th] century, the unconscious is used in a more limited and empirical way to indicate automatic functions such as reflexes ... from the 1880s onwards there are the new psychiatric and psychological coinages emerging in the work of Pierre Janet, F. W. H. Myers and others, including the subconscious, the subliminal, and the dissociated aspects of the self.¹⁸⁵

While the precise nature of the significance of Romanticism for the development of psychoanalysis remains a topic for ongoing debate and reappraisal, the fact of its significance

There are plenty of occasions when the distinction has little force' (pp. 93-94). However, as Eagleton goes on to observe, 'Generally speaking, Romanticism is a darker, more troubled affair than Idealism, even if in another of its moods it shares its zest and buoyancy' (p. 96).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 53. See also Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 65-70.

¹⁸⁵ Matt ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 8-9.

as a formative influence is no longer disputed.¹⁸⁶ Its pervasive influence can be observed to operate on multiple levels ranging across those of culture and *habitus* mediated via the idiosyncrasies of individual reception. Moreover, it is evident from even the most cursory examination of Freud's writings that he drew extensively upon the work of Romantic authors and philosophers.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that Freud did not always explicitly acknowledge or investigate the historical context to those ideas that he subsequently appropriated for use in his own writings.¹⁸⁸

It is from within this wider cultural milieu that we can begin to assess the contributions made by the German Idealist philosophers F. W. J. von Schelling (1775-1854) and G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) towards the creation of an esoterically imbued proto-psychoanalytic unconscious.¹⁸⁹ For instance, it is possible to discern in the quest for a 'mythology of reason' originally proposed in 'The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism' (1797) the nascent beginnings of a psychoanalytic *mythos* whose culturally ubiquitous reach only came to

¹⁸⁶ Vermorel and Vermorel, 'Was Freud a Romantic?' and Robert Snell, *Uncertainties, Mysteries and Doubts: Romanticism and the analytic attitude* (New York: Routledge, 2013). See also the numerous entries on Romanticism in Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*. However, the multifarious historiographical genealogies linking Romanticism to psychoanalysis are sufficiently complex as to preclude their being conjoined under the rubric of a singular 'tradition'—see ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, p. 9.

¹⁸⁷ See Vermorel and Vermorel, 'Was Freud a Romantic?' p. 17. For an exposition concerning the relevance of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as applied to the growth of a specifically psychoanalytic *Bildung*, see Richard H. Armstrong, *A compulsion to Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 25-32.

¹⁸⁸ See Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 40-41 and ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, p. 161, p. 236.

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*; S. J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Jon Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel's Anticipation of Psychoanalysis* (Albany: SUNY, 2002); Molly Macdonald, *Hegel and Psychoanalysis: A New Interpretation of Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Routledge, 2014). A strong case can be made for situating Freud's writings within the wider German philosophical tradition beginning with Kant. While the present account does not extend to a discussion on the influence of Schopenhauer on Freud, his potential significance as a conduit for the esoteric themes explored in this study must nonetheless be acknowledged—see Matthew C. Altman and Cynthia D. Coe, *The Fractured Self in Freud and German Philosophy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 79-91 and Hein van Dongen et al., *Wild Beasts of the Philosophical Desert* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 42-69.

fruition in the twentieth-century and beyond.¹⁹⁰ As we shall see, while the philosophical writings of Schelling and Hegel draw extensively upon a wide range of esoteric sources and ideas, both philosophers acknowledged in their writings a very particular indebtedness to the work of Jacob Boehme.¹⁹¹ Moreover, both philosophers drew upon the work of Spinoza (1632-1677) to arrive at what amounts to being a *de facto* position of dual-aspect monism.¹⁹²

2.4. Esoteric traces in the writings of F. W. J. Schelling and G. W. F. Hegel

According to Jon Mills, ‘Schelling was the first to offer a systematic and coherent theory of the unconscious’.¹⁹³ Moreover, Sean McGrath has proposed that ‘Prototypes for three of the major models of the unconscious in the twentieth century, the Freudian bio-personal unconscious, the Jungian collective unconscious, and the Lacanian semiotic unconscious, can be traced back to Schelling’.¹⁹⁴ In Gord Barentsen’s estimation, ‘in Schelling’s work, there are aspects of both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology, and as such it sets in relief the

¹⁹⁰ The question of whether this fragment should be attributed to Hegel, Schelling or Hölderlin remains a matter for scholarly debate. For a translation along with a scholarly exegesis of this ‘earliest system,’ see David Farrell Krell, *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 16-44. See also Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 63-67, where the author contends that the ‘earliest system’ constituted an articulation of the idea that ‘we have no mythology’ (Schegel)—a claim which prefigured the idea of psychoanalysis as a ‘scientific mythology’ that aspired to become a ‘science of mythology’. See also Vermorel and Vermorel, ‘Was Freud a Romantic?’ p. 26 and Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 84-91.

¹⁹¹ See ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*; McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*; Glenn Alexander Magee, ‘Hegel on the Paranormal: Altered State of Consciousness in the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit,’ *Aries* 8 (2008) pp. 21-36; Friedemann Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg: Mysticism and German Idealism* (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997).

¹⁹² See Harald Atmanspacher and Dean Rickles, *Dual-Aspect Monism and the Deep Structure of Meaning* (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 10-13. While the authors observe that the dynamics of Hegel’s ‘absolute’ tacitly reintroduces ‘something like the Kantian transcendental realm of noumena,’ they also aver that ‘dual-aspect monism offers the option, contrary to Kant, of direct, immanent experiences of the psychophysically neutral reality, which avoids the problem of access to a transcendental realm. If this reality is primordial enough, like an *Unus Mundus*, it may be aligned with the “absolute” and bring us back to Hegel,’ *ibid.*, pp. 12-13. As we saw in chapter one, the psychoanalytic theory of mind can be construed as dual-aspect monist in terms of its theoretical orientation.

¹⁹³ Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, p. 45.

¹⁹⁴ McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, p. 1.

theoretical break between Freud and Jung'.¹⁹⁵ Behind such claims lies the tacit acknowledgement of the indirect contributions made by Boehme's ideas towards these developments.¹⁹⁶ While Freud referred to Schelling on only two occasions in his writings, extensive parallels have nonetheless been drawn between Schelling's ideas and those of Freud.¹⁹⁷ It has been claimed that 'Freud connects Schelling with *both* occultism and "clear-sighted" scientific explanation—thus occupying the same territory that Freud himself seeks to lay claim to in his "scientific" explanation of the dream work that follows'.¹⁹⁸ Yet despite these aspirations towards a 'scientific' dream-work, we nonetheless find lodged within the Freudian *metapsychology* the enigmatic signifiers of an uncanny, atavistic substrate within whose depths there can be discerned the glimmers of a distinctly Schellingian *metaphysics*:

Schubert's expression "the night-side of nature" (*die Nachtseite der Natur*) sums up the Schelling school's fascination with intuition, dreams, clairvoyance, hypnosis, and somnambulism—phenomena that not only give the lie to the self-mastery and self-possession of the Cartesian ego, but also indicate higher states of awareness in the unconscious.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Gord Barentsen, *Romantic Metasubjectivity through Schelling and Jung: Rethinking the Romantic Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 16.

¹⁹⁶ See, for example, the following: 'The historical claim of this book is that Jacob Boehme's alchemico-theosophical psychology, modified and given metaphysical grounding by Schelling, is the origin of the psychodynamic notion of the unconscious,' McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, pp. 1-2. See also Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*; ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*; Sean J. McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling: The Turn to the Positive* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021). For a useful overview and compilation of Schelling's writings, see Benjamin Berger and Daniel Whistler (eds.) *The Schelling Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

¹⁹⁷ See Teresa Fenichel, *Schelling, Freud, and the Philosophical Foundations of Psychoanalysis: Uncanny Belonging* (New York: Routledge, 2019). The two texts in which Schelling is explicitly referenced by Freud are chapter one of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and his paper on 'The Uncanny' (1919)—see *ibid.*, p. 10, p. 17 n. 18. Notably, Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869) privileged both Schelling and Hegel as 'forerunners of the unconscious'. Hartmann's text was well-known to both Freud and Jung—see Barentsen, *Romantic Metasubjectivity*, p. 80.

¹⁹⁸ Fenichel, *Schelling, Freud, and the Philosophical Foundations of Psychoanalysis*, p. 17 n. 18. The text alluded to is Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

¹⁹⁹ McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, p. 17.

However, we also find that ideas whose provenance can be traced back to Behmenist notions of ‘drive’ and ‘desire,’ were subsequently decoupled from their theosophical contexts in accordance with the requirements of an increasingly disenchanted and secularised intellectual milieu.²⁰⁰

In Luria, Boehme, Oetinger, and Saint-Martin, an alternative notion of personality takes shape, strikingly different from the model of representational consciousness emerging out of late Scholasticism, Descartes and Leibniz. On the theosophic view, personality is primarily the product of drive and desire rather than representation and knowledge. Both the middle Schelling and Hegel thematize this model in modern philosophical terms, thereby freeing it from its visionary and Gnostic frames.

Schopenhauer and von Hartmann in turn secularize the Bohemian-Schellingian will by disentangling it from its religious frame. In this disenchanted form, the psychodynamic unconscious becomes a catch-phrase for late nineteenth-century medical psychiatry.²⁰¹

According to McGrath, ‘Schelling’s notion of the unconscious originates in Western esoteric discourses’.²⁰² This is due not only to Schelling’s commitment to the idea of ‘living nature,’ active as an integral feature of his early work, but as a result of his long-standing interest in topics such as clairvoyance, theosophy and alchemy, as is evidenced throughout the middle period of his philosophical writings in particular. Moreover, whilst Schelling’s later writings tended to be more critical of his earlier theosophical commitments, such speculations

²⁰⁰ For more on this theme, see ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious* and McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁰² Op. cit., p. 21.

nonetheless tallied with his later evocations of a collective and symbolic unconscious entailing a doctrine of creation structured around a theory of correspondences.²⁰³ In marked contrast to Fichte, and in terms more explicit than those employed by Hegel, Schelling assigned a spirit of subjectivity to nature in a manner that situated its activities within a wider ontological continuum that married its operations to the *microcosmos* of human subjectivity.²⁰⁴ Consequently, we find his ideas described as ‘the key node through which Western esoteric notions of will and the spirit-matter relationship are transmitted to nineteenth-century medicine and psychology’.²⁰⁵ Schelling transformed the philosophical architecture of post-Kantian idealism by transposing its conceptualisations into a realm of Gnostic and Neoplatonically inspired cosmological speculation.²⁰⁶ To this end, he drew upon the writings of authors such as Ficino, Bruno, Proclus, Oetinger and Boehme.²⁰⁷ Schelling first became acquainted with the ideas of Boehme as early as 1799, when Tieck introduced the latter’s ideas to the Schlegel’s intellectual circle. By 1802 Schelling was actively seeking to obtain his own edition of Boehme’s writings, although it was only in 1804 that he actually succeeded in doing so.²⁰⁸ By 1809 we find Schelling once again seeking to acquire an edition

²⁰³ ‘Nature for Schelling, as for Isaac of Luria and Jacob Boehme, is a negation of infinity, a contraction (zimzum) of the divine being, which leaves the space, the meontic nothingness, in which something other than God can come to be,’ McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, p. 204. See also Dongen et al., *Wild Beasts of the Philosophical Desert*, pp. 32 ff. For evidence of Schelling’s more critical approach to Boehme’s ideas in his later writings, see the following: ‘Daring mystics or theosophers—like Jakob Böhme—overcome immediate empirical certainties, but in so doing form, as it were,, merely a drunken, self-enclosed, conceptless and senseless world,’ [*Lectures on the System of Positive Philosophy 1832/33*], in Berger and Whistler, *The Schelling Reader*, p. 203.

²⁰⁴ ‘Schelling’s often fantastic, speculative theogony ... begins as a Boehmian-inspired narrative of the birth of God from the unground ... For Schelling, a person is not one who stands logically in need of recognition by another, but one who is internally self-mediated and hence logically and morally free in their relations to the other,’ McGrath, *The Philosophical Foundations of the Late Schelling*, p. viii. McGrath coins the term ‘non-dialectical personalism’ to differentiate Schelling’s understanding of personhood from the ‘dialectic of recognition’ proposed by Hegel (ibid.).

²⁰⁵ McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, pp. 22-23.

²⁰⁶ See ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, pp. 111-112.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*, pp. 114-116.

of Boehme's works, having given his previous copy to his friend, the theosopher Franz von Baader.²⁰⁹

Six essential propositions have been emphasised as integral to Schelling's distinctive philosophical perspective, the basic tenets of which can be briefly summarised as follows. Firstly, Schelling posits that reality possesses an intelligible structure. Secondly, he emphasises the philosophical significance of nature. Thirdly, he highlights the importance of an unconscious dimension to reality. Fourthly, he views the constituent elements of reality to be parts of a greater whole. Fifthly, he construes works of art as possessing the potential to exhibit the full truth of reality. Finally, he views reality not as being essentially a 'substance' or a 'thing,' so much as a dynamic and a productive process.²¹⁰ Schelling developed throughout the course of his philosophical trajectory a fourfold elaboration of the unconscious, beginning with the conjectured instantiation of a pansophic 'lost science' the origins of which were to be found somewhere in the remote epochs of history. To these speculations he wedded an essentially religious ontology derived from the writings of German medieval mystics such as Meister Eckhart, from whom he took inspiration regarding the existence of a divine abyss (precursor to Boehme's *Ungrund*).²¹¹ Schelling then set about creatively reformulating these attributes so as to simultaneously 'ground the self *and* release it from the conceptual closure of the system'.²¹² Onto this conceptual edifice, Schelling further added a theory of historical repression, which he developed as part of his wider theory of mythology. This account entailed a view of the divine as being active throughout the

²⁰⁹ ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, p. 150.

²¹⁰ Berger and Whistler, *The Schelling Reader*, pp. 7-8.

²¹¹ 'In his fourth book [*Forty Questions of the Soul*], written in 1620, Boehme took up the term *Ungrund*, which was ordinarily used as a technical term for the status of an argument or proposition that lacked a prior justification or reason (*Grund*). Instead, Boehme used it to designate God as he is in himself,' Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*, p. 50.

²¹² ffytche, *The Foundations of the Unconscious*, p. 153. See also pp. 161-162.

material world in a manner both hidden and mysterious. Schelling described this divine activity in alchemical-Behmenist terms as ‘the flash of light concealed in the hard stone’.²¹³ During his middle period, Schelling also developed a distinctive teleological theory of libido founded upon the primacy of drive (*trieb*) and desire, the underlying tenets of which he took from Boehme with very little alteration, thereby effectively abandoning a Greek metaphysics of being (*ousia*) in order to move towards a Kabbalistically inspired metaphysics of life.²¹⁴

Schelling’s *Clara* (1810) is arguably his most personal and revealing text when it comes to the depiction of themes of an explicitly mesmeric, clairvoyant and theosophical nature. Moreover, it is a work saturated by a profound experience of mourning and loss.²¹⁵ Notably, while *Clara* is both thematically and stylistically indebted to a dialectical philosophical tradition stretching back to Plato’s *Phaedo*, its implied anthropology is imbued with an explicitly esoteric *Naturphilosophie* indebted to the writings of Swedenborg, Boehme and von Baader, in which nature, human subjectivity and the *Geisterwelt* are viewed as ontologically permeable and existentially contiguous. While the human body is conceptualised in terms of its ‘externality,’ and the ‘spirit’ is construed in terms of its ‘thinking’ or ‘consciousness,’ these two aspects are conjoined by a *tertium quid*, namely ‘soul,’ which Schelling explicitly situates within the Paracelsian tradition of the ‘astral body,’ reconfigured to meet the requirements of a systematic philosophical exposition. As with Hegel and Schopenhauer, Schelling takes anomalous forms of human experiencing seriously, and makes explicit efforts to integrate them into his wider philosophical programme.²¹⁶

²¹³ Ibid., p. 162.

²¹⁴ See McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, pp. 180-181.

²¹⁵ F. W. J. Schelling, *Clara: or, On Nature’s Connection to the Spirit World* [trans. with an intro. by Fiona Steinkamp] (Albany: SUNY, 2002). In Karl Jasper’s view, it was the crisis induced by the death of his wife Caroline in 1809 that intensified Schelling’s interest in theosophy—see ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, p. 101

²¹⁶ See Dongen et al., *Wild Beasts of the Philosophical Desert*, pp. 35-41.

Notably, his depiction of the unconscious ‘reflects not simply the attempt to produce an adequate account of the phenomena of interior life, but also a concern with establishing the possibility of a self-caused self, or a self the logic of whose development is irreducibly detached from more systematic forms of explanation’.²¹⁷

Despite the existence of vast libraries of Hegelian scholarship, a pronounced tendency either to under-emphasise or even to dismiss the more explicitly esoteric dimensions present within Hegel’s philosophy has been remarked upon.²¹⁸ Alongside the writings of Schelling, it is in the works of Hegel that we encounter a version of German Idealism in which esoteric ideas are actively deployed in the elaboration of a speculative metaphysics of the human subject. Such claims are not intended to support an erroneous one-dimensional, ‘essentialist’ reading of Hegel-as-hermeticist. As O’Regan has remarked, ‘Whatever else one can expect of the conceptual object that is Hegelian thought, it is not likely to be available to simple, one-sided description’.²¹⁹ Such acts of hermeneutic reductionism draw our attention to the extent to which processes of *exdenomination* have been obliquely active within certain elements of Hegelian scholarship.²²⁰ However, despite such tendencies, more recent scholarship has started to focus upon to the extent to which significant aspects of Hegel’s philosophical

²¹⁷ ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, p. 23.

²¹⁸ Notable exceptions to this include Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*; Cyril O’Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: SUNY, 1994); J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (New York: Collier books, 1962). In Magee’s estimation, ‘The non-metaphysical/anti-theological reading relies on ignoring or explaining away the many frankly metaphysical, cosmological, theological, and theosophical passages in Hegel’s writings and lectures. Thus, the non-metaphysical reading is less an interpretation of Hegel than a revision ... The non-metaphysical reading is simply Hegel shorn of everything offensive to the modern, secular, liberal mind,’ Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 15. Notably in this context, Hanegraaff may have underestimated the significance of German Idealism as a conduit for the mesmeric traditions—see Wouter Hanegraaff, ‘Imagining the Unconscious,’ *Intellectual History Review* 22:4 (2012), p. 540. For a useful selection of Hegel’s writings, see Frederick G. Weiss (ed.) *Hegel: The Essential Writings* [Foreword by J.N. Findlay] (London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974).

²¹⁹ O’Regan, *Heterodox Hegel*, p. 2.

²²⁰ ‘Barth’s notion of “exdomination” is equivalent to ideology where the emphasis is not so much upon ideology as a system of beliefs as ideology as an operation of repression or excision of alternate discursive items. Thus an ideology is just a much constituted by what is excluded as what is included,’ *ibid.*, p. 373, n. 15.

oeuvre are indebted to the various Hermetic traditions; while his most influential work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), has been described as ‘a work of magic’ and a ‘grimoire,’ whose ultimate origins are to be found within the Gnostic and hermetic spiritual traditions:²²¹

... Hegel was interested in and influenced by strands of thought associated with most, if not all, Hermetic thinkers, such as alchemy, Kabbalism, mesmerism, extrasensory perception, spiritualism, dowsing, eschatology, *prisca theologia*, *philosophia perennis*, Lullism, Paracelsism, Joachimism, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Eckhartian mysticism,, and doctrines of occult ‘correspondences’ and ‘cosmic sympathies’... Hegel’s system ... is hermetic in both form and content.²²²

In tandem with his immersion in and indebtedness to Hermeticism, Hegel has been acknowledged as a major philosophical precursor to psychoanalytical theory:²²³

Hegel anticipated many key psychoanalytic concepts including the unconscious operations of thought, imagination, fantasy, feelings, conflict, and the very conditions that inform psychopathology. He also recognized that the core of character and one’s ethical convictions are preserved and emanate from unconscious processes and values internalized from the family and centrally connected with the community. He further

²²¹ See Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 6. The claim that Hegel was explicitly a *part* of the Hermetic Tradition (rather than merely *influenced* by it) is derived from a polemic essay by Eric Voegelin entitled ‘On Hegel: a study in sorcery’ (1971). Voegelin’s argument is indebted to Ferdinand Christian Bauer’s proposal (originally made in 1835) that Jacob Boehme was a modern gnostic and that both Schelling and Hegel (as Boehme’s intellectual heirs and epigones) were themselves crypto-gnostics (this thesis having received its most recent comprehensive exposition in the work of Cyril O’Regan). Magee’s book can similarly be read as a highly nuanced elaboration of Voegelin’s original essay on Hegel.

²²² Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 255-257.

²²³ ‘We know ... from the libraries of each, that both Freud and Jung read and carefully annotated Hegel’s work,’ Hester McFarland Solomon, cited in: David Henderson, *Apophatic Elements in the Theory and Practice of Psychoanalysis: Pseudo-Dionysius and C.G. Jung* (Abington: Routledge, 2014), p. 99.

recognised many elements of mental activity that are construed by psychoanalysis as defense mechanisms, including the splitting of the ego, fixation, regression, projection and projective identification, repression as significant ‘forgetting’ that manifests itself as a compromise formation—‘disease’—primary narcissism as ‘subjective universality,’ the primitive thinking and upheaval of the passions—what Freud called ‘primary process’—associated with derangement, and the notion of sublation as sublimation; not to mention one of the most important discoveries of all—that the *ego* is also unconscious.²²⁴

While Jon Mills has drawn our attention to the discursive network conjoining Hegel’s usage of the terms *Abgrund* (abyss, chasm) and *Schacht* (shaft, pit, mine) to *bewußtlos* (unconscious), it is nonetheless worthwhile observing that, at the heart of this linguistic matrix, its Behmenist precursor and analogue *Ungrund* is made notable by its absence.²²⁵ To some extent, this can be attributed to the fact that Hegel’s understanding of *Ungrund* was mediated via a range of philosophical intermediaries that included the Neo-Platonists, Erigena, Fichte and Schelling.²²⁶ Hegel’s tacit avoidance of the Behmenist *Ungrund* is also the indirect consequence of a polemical dispute with Schelling concerning a perceived lack of dynamism in the latter’s conceptualisation of the ‘Absolute,’ which Hegel interpreted as arising from Schelling’s misguided adoption of the Behmenist conceptualisation in his essay, *On the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), in which the formulation $A=A$ is utilised as the expression of absolute identity.²²⁷ What is especially striking about the Hegelian phenomenology of the unconscious is the extent to which its *mundus imaginalis* is haunted by

²²⁴ Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, p. 191.

²²⁵ See Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, pp. XIII-XIV, p. 50, p. 53; Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*, pp. 195-198; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 36-50, pp. 162-163.

²²⁶ Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, p. 16.

²²⁷ Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*, p. 198.

a preternatural phantasmagoria of Gothic and Daemonic imagery evocative of the ‘night-side’ of Germanic *Naturphilosophie*, the obscurities of which prefigure the uncanny abyss of the psychoanalytic unconscious:

The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity—an unending wealth of many presentations, images, of which none happens to occur to him—or which are not present. This night, the inner of nature, that exists here—pure self—in phantasmagorical presentations, is night all around it, here shoots a bloody head—there another white shape, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye—into a night that becomes awful, it suspends the night of the world here in an opposition. In this night being has returned.²²⁸

In the light of Hegel’s explicitly stated and professionally sustained interest in animal magnetism (a nuanced critique of which came to inform his own very particular understanding of ‘mysticism’), it is possible to speculate that the above account might actually document one of his own experiments with the phenomenon of hypnagogia.²²⁹ However, in marked contrast to Schelling’s conflation of Boehme’s ideas with those of experimental animal magnetism, Hegel developed a more critical view of Boehme’s ‘mysticism,’ which took it on a divergent trajectory from that of the sixth (and final) state of

²²⁸ Cited in Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 85-86. The text itself is taken from Hegel’s *Realphilosophie* manuscript of 1805-06. C.f. with the following extract, taken from C. G. Jung’s *Red Book*: ‘Where am I? Are there also cases of death in Hell for those who have never thought about death? I look at my bloodstained hands—as if I were a murderer ... Is it not the blood of my brother that sticks to my hands? The moon paints my shadow black on the white walls of the chamber. What am I doing here? Why this horrible drama? ... But because I do not want to have it, my best becomes a horror to me. Because of that I myself become a horror, a horror to myself and to others, and a bad spirit of torment,’ C. G. Jung, *The Red Book: A Reader’s Edition* [ed. and with an introduction by Sonu Shamdasani] (London: Norton, 2009), pp. 236-237.

²²⁹ Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*, pp. 29-55 and pp. 87-200; Magee, ‘Hegel on the Paranormal,’ pp. 28-31; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, pp. 215-218.

Hellsehen ('clairvoyance') purportedly encountered by percipients made subject to the somnambulistic state. More specifically, Hegel sought to develop a *speculative* approach to mysticism characterised by an idea of dialectical progression, whose exemplars included Boehme in particular, as well as the Neoplatonic tradition more generally; and against whose teachings he unfavourably compared the purported pseudo-mysticism of the Romantics and the followers of Schelling.²³⁰ In his *Fermenta cognitionis* (a text Hegel was deeply familiar with), the theosophist Franz von Baader provided the following pithy definition of animal magnetism—'magnetizing is no more nor less than imagining'.²³¹ In Hegel's estimation, this was precisely the crux of the problem. If the state of *Hellsehen* was susceptible to the vagaries of the imagination, then it constituted a dubious medium for the attainment of any kind of reliable understanding. Moreover, the magnetic state itself entailed a descent into more primitive states of mind entailing regression and dissociation. The dynamics of this 'descent' were of a piece with the prevalent view of *Naturphilosophie* whereby nature and psyche were conceptualised as discrete polarities situated along a single continuum, whose traversal could potentially transcend the usual limitations of time and space.²³² While Hegel did not deny the therapeutic effectiveness of animal magnetism, he nonetheless thought it important to distinguish its value as a treatment for 'hysteria' from more speculative claims that it could be utilised to access to visionary states of consciousness.²³³ Notably, in 1818 Hegel actually attended mesmeric and spiritualist séances with his friend Franz Josef

²³⁰ The expert on animal magnetism and exponent of Boehme Johann Karl Passavant arrived at an opposing viewpoint and concluded that Boehme wrote his works in a state of magnetic *Hellsehen* (Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*, p. 41). Despite such differences of opinion, there can be no doubt as to the serious nature of Hegel's engagement with Boehme's writings (especially from 1811 onwards) regarding which Muratori's book arguably constitutes the most comprehensive analysis published to date. Her differences with respect to Magee's analysis are helpfully summarised in n. 274, p. 65 and n. 290, p. 69. In its essentials, whilst Magee interprets Hegel's interests in Boehme and animal magnetism to be convergent markers of his esoteric interests, Muratori views them as conceptually divergent, albeit as nonetheless central with regards to their significance for the formation of Hegel's own views concerning the nature of authentic mystical experience.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46. Notably, von Baader interpreted animal magnetism as a practice that naturally evolved out of the teachings of Boehme.

²³² Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, p. 220.

²³³ Muratori, *The First German Philosopher*, pp. 68-70.

Schelver, in response to which he made some intriguing cross-cultural comparisons in his writings concerning mesmerism, ‘shamanism’ and the use of hallucinogens to access what would now be referred to as altered states of consciousness.²³⁴ Hegel goes so far in his speculations as to assert that it is precisely the ability of his philosophical ‘system’ to give an account of ‘paranormal’ phenomena that constitutes the proof for its veracity:

Hegel’s definition [of ‘magic’] comprises all those phenomena that we today term ‘occult’ or ‘paranormal’. A magical relationship is one which operates without mediation and which seems to cancel the limitations of time and space. Given this ... magic is completely inexplicable to the understanding. It can only be comprehended by speculative philosophy ... Hegel himself essentially argues that only his philosophy can make sense out of the evidence for paranormal phenomena ... In other words, animal magnetism constitutes empirical disconfirmation of the materialist model of the mind.²³⁵

Notably, Magee concludes this paper by aligning his own reading of Hegel’s theory of mind with that of the ‘filter’ theory thesis as described by Edward Kelly and his collaborators in their book *Irreducible Mind* (2007).²³⁶

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²³⁴ Magee, ‘Hegel on the Paranormal,’ p. 31.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 25, pp. 35-36.

²³⁶ Edward F. Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind: Towards a Psychology for the 21st Century* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).

2.5. From magnetic gnosis to hypnotic trance

It is not easy to overestimate the importance of the part played by hypnotism in the history of the origin of psychoanalysis. From a theoretical as well as from a therapeutic point of view, psychoanalysis has at its command a legacy which it has inherited from hypnotism.²³⁷

Hypnotism has been described as ‘... an enigma, a phenomenon without a theory’.²³⁸ Nor are its historical antecedents, as embodied in the shifting manifestations of mesmerism, animal magnetism, artificial somnambulism and magnetic gnosis, any less mysterious. Indeed, they may arguably be more so, particularly if it is accepted that the practices associated with the induction of somnambulist trance were potentially more complex—and more varied—than its official theories might frequently have suggested.²³⁹ Whilst standard psychoanalytic historiographies have tended to present the arrival of Freudian psychoanalysis as instantiating a radical break from earlier approaches to the unconscious, a strong case has been made for asserting that “... it cannot be plausibly maintained that hypnosis was ultimately superseded by psychoanalysis”.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Sigmund Freud, ‘A Short Account of Psychoanalysis,’ in: *Sigmund Freud: Historical and Expository Works on Psychoanalysis* (vol. 15) (London: Penguin, 1993 [1923]), p. 163 [SE 19: 192].

²³⁸ Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, ‘Simulating the Unconscious,’ *Psychoanalysis and History*, 7 (2005) p. 5.

²³⁹ As evidence for this, see for example the passage from Emma Hardinge Britten’s *Ghost Land* (1876) cited by Hanegraaff in ‘Magnetic Gnosis,’ p. 123 where the induction of trance states is attributed to various methods, including drugs, spells, crystal gazing, music and dancing, to name but several.

²⁴⁰ Andreas Meyer, *Sites of the Unconscious: Hypnosis and the Emergence of the Psychoanalytic Setting* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 225. For a trenchant critique of the excesses of the Freudian ‘hagiography,’ see Mikkel Borch-Jacobson and Sonu Shamdasani, *The Freud Files: An Inquiry into the History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

It is neither necessary nor practicable in the present context to set out a comprehensive history of the mesmeric ‘traditions’.²⁴¹ Each of the diverse cultural movements thereby denoted are sufficiently complex when considered individually as to require a lengthy monograph in their own right.²⁴² Even so, a brief historical overview of the historiographical territory will be useful as a means to delineate the conceptual vicissitudes through which the various esoteric and mesmeric ‘currents’ became imbricated with each other throughout this period.

Animal magnetism was the most widely known and influential form of therapy available to the practitioners of Romantic medicine. Its origins lay in the work of Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) who from 1774 onwards developed his eponymous theory of animal magnetism, in which ‘magnetic passes’ were therapeutically utilised under the aegis of a highly speculative cosmological fluid theory. Although Mesmer viewed himself as a mechanist and a materialist, his laudatory allusions to Enlightenment savants such as Newton (‘the last of the magicians’ according to the economist John Maynard Keynes) and Descartes (a one-time aspiring Rosicrucian adept, some of whose philosophical insights came to him in the form of dreams) were nonetheless underwritten by hermetic theories of magical healing, the teachings of which he originally encountered in the writings of figures such as Paracelsus, Athanasius

²⁴¹ For excellent overviews, see Alan Gauld, *A History of Hypnotism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

²⁴² The standard histories are Gauld, *A History of Hypnotism* and Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud*. Ellenberger’s *The Discovery of the Unconscious* provides an extensive account of the mesmeric pre-history of the depth psychologies. See also F. X. Charet, *Spiritualism and the Foundations of C. G. Jung’s Psychology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) pp. 27-58 and Jürgen Barkhoff, ‘Romantic Science and Psychology’. For esoteric perspectives on the history of the mesmeric traditions, see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, pp. 260-277; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Magnetic Gnosis: Somnambulism and the quest for absolute knowledge’ in: A.B. Kilcher & P. Theisoeh (eds.) *Die Enzyklopädie der Esoterik: Allwissenheitsmythen und universalwissenschaftliche Modelle in der esoterik der Neuzeit* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2010), pp. 118-134; and the entry by Bertrand Méheust on ‘Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism’ in Hanegraaff et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 75-82. All of these sources have been extensively utilised in the following pages.

Kircher, Robert Fludd and Johannes Baptista van Helmont.²⁴³ Mesmer's own account of his experiences leading up to the founding of his own school of therapeutics reads like an amalgam of Ellenberger's concept of 'creative illness' intensified by the more ecstatic elements of a visionary theosophy:

A devouring fire filled my entire soul. I was searching for the truth no longer full of tender devotion—I was searching for it full of extremest unrest. Only field, woods and the most remote wildernesses still appealed to me ... I must really have resembled a madman. All other occupations became hateful to me ... I regretted the time that I needed to give expression to my thoughts. I found that we are used to clothing each thought immediately, without long reflection, in the language best known to us: and so I made the strange decision to free myself from this slavery ... For three months I thought without words.

When I ended this deep thinking, I looked round in amazement. My senses no longer betrayed me as before. All things looked different to me...Gradually peace returned to my soul, for now it was wholly convinced that the truth I had been pursuing so vehemently really existed ... Now a long and difficult journey through the realm of other people's experiences lay ahead of me.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Mesmer's propensity to self-interpret his teachings as a form of 'materialism' despite their dependency upon esoteric modes of thinking bears comparison with similarly erroneous readings of Freudian analysis as being unambiguously 'materialist' in terms of its orientation.

²⁴⁴ Mesmer, cited in Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, p. 260. On the role of 'creative illness' in the founding of dynamic psychiatry, see Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*: 'A creative illness succeeds a period of intense preoccupation with an idea and search for a certain truth. It is a polymorphous condition that can take the shape of depression, neurosis, psychosomatic ailments, or even psychosis ... The termination is often rapid and marked by a phase of exhilaration. The subject emerges from his ordeal with a permanent transformation in his personality and the conviction that he has discovered a great truth or a new spiritual world' pp. 447-448.

As might be inferred from the words of Mesmer just cited, it would appear that even a self-designated ‘mechanist’ and ‘materialist’ could, on occasion, embody a predisposition towards ‘an ecstatic state beyond rational discourse’.²⁴⁵ After experiencing some initial success in the treatment of patients by using actual magnets, Mesmer had become aware by 1774 that he was able to bring about cures in their absence. Consequently, he speculated that these curative properties did not originate in the magnets themselves but were attributable to the ‘animal magnetism’ issuing from the person of the magnetizer. With regards to their essentials, Mesmer’s teachings can be distilled into four basic principles: that there exists a subtle fluid filling the universe, which forms a connecting medium between humanity, the earth and the celestial bodies; that illness is caused by the unequal distribution of this mysterious fluid in the human body whilst health is restored once its equilibrium has been restored; that certain techniques can be utilised to convey this fluid to other people; and that ‘magnetic crises’ can be invoked in others as a means for restoring them to health. However, the holistic conception of ‘animal magnetism’ entailed a complex matrix of psychological, anthropological and cosmological theories entailing an intricate web of correspondences hypothesised to conjoin humankind to the universe; the therapeutic techniques practiced by the magnetizer; the phenomenon of magnetic somnambulism (the attributes of which are described further below); and the various cultural currents that were set in motion by Mesmer’s activities.²⁴⁶

In 1784 the marquis de Puységur induced a somnambulist trance (subsequently described as *artificial somnambulism* to distinguish its more dream-like qualities from the therapeutic ‘crises’ associated with mesmerism) in one of his subjects that reportedly produced a series of

²⁴⁵ Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, p. 261.

²⁴⁶ Méheust, ‘Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism,’ p. 76.

‘paranormal’ phenomena analogous to those subsequently described under rubrics such as telepathy and clairvoyance.²⁴⁷ Further experiments involving other participants duplicated many of these original findings. Although Mesmer did not refer to any personal experiences of the ‘paranormal’ in his own writings, there has been speculation that he may nonetheless have encountered such phenomena during the course of his therapeutic practice, but neglected to aver to them as they confounded his materialist commitments.²⁴⁸ Although animal magnetism subsequently fell into disrepute at an institutional level (largely in response to a series of highly disputed inquiries, the most significant of which took place in France between 1826 and 1842), it nonetheless continued to flourish across the wider cultural milieu.²⁴⁹ By 1843, the progressive ‘psychologization’ of mesmerism was exemplified through the introduction of the term ‘hypnosis’ by the Scottish doctor James Braid (1795-1860) to denote a practice inspired by animal magnetism, albeit one more modestly reformulated so as to fit the requirements of orthodox medical practice. Notably, although Braid remained non-committal regarding the anomalous effects that were historically associated with animal magnetism, he did not unequivocally reject the possibility that such phenomena could actually occur, as has often been assumed.²⁵⁰

Following its re-theorisation under the rubric of ‘hypnotism,’ a diminished range of trance phenomena were once again readmitted into the hallowed portals of official French medicine under the auspices of the famous Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893). As a consequence of Charcot’s patronage, hypnosis rose rapidly to prominence as a technique for investigating

²⁴⁷ For a helpful account of the socio-historical dynamics that contributed to the shift from Mesmerism to somnambulism, and then hypnotism, see Henri F. Ellenberger, ‘Mesmer and Puységur: From Magnetism to Hypnotism,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 52B (2), pp. 137-153.

²⁴⁸ Méheust, ‘Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism,’ p. 77.

²⁴⁹ Notably, the sexual component to the ‘magnetic crisis’ was emphasised in a secret report on animal magnetism made by J. S. Bailly to Louis XVI in 1784. See Raymond De Saussure, ‘Transference and Animal Magnetism,’ *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 12 (1943) pp. 194-201 for more on this.

²⁵⁰ Méheust, ‘Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism,’ pp. 78-79.

hysteria in particular, and as a tool of depth psychology more generally. Towards the end of the nineteenth-century, animal magnetism underwent a resurgence in academia, albeit one now coloured by the prevailing assumptions of the ascendant materialist paradigm of the period. Along with this resurgence, there arose a series of comparative research programmes that were pursued in England under the rubric of ‘psychical research,’ and in France as *métapsychique*.²⁵¹ Yet despite this reframing of somnambulistic phenomena under the auspices of a more scientifically acceptable nomenclature, we find in 1886 the young Pierre Janet (1859-1947) delivering a report to the Parisian Société de Psychologie Physiologique recounting a series of experiments in which a woman referred to as Léonie B. was placed into a somnambulistic trance by means, so it seemed, of mental suggestion alone.²⁵² Although the phenomenon of ‘provoked somnambulism at a distance’ was well-known to the early magnetists, it nonetheless presented itself as something extraordinary to the assembled members of the society. While Janet was careful to maintain a neutral tone throughout the course of his exposition, it is a matter of record that cases of a similar nature were reported by a wide range of credible investigators, including Charles Richet, Henri Beaunis and Jules Hericourt.²⁵³ However, important figures such as Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) considered the allegedly excessive attention given to trance phenomena by the nascent discipline of psychology to be antithetical to its development as a science.²⁵⁴ By the time we arrive at the annual review of French thought published in the *Philosophical Review* (1922-1923), a

²⁵¹ ‘Metapsychists used séances in their attempt to develop a new science of the mind, which they hoped would be incorporated into the scientific corpus,’ Sofie Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural: From Spiritism and Occultism to Psychical Research and Metapsychics in France, 1853-1931* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 6.

²⁵² See Henri F. Ellenberger, *Beyond the Unconscious: Essays of Henri F. Ellenberger in the History of Psychiatry* [intro. & ed. by Mark S. Micale] (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 247.

²⁵³ M. Brady Brower, *Unruly Spirits: The Science of Psychic Phenomena in France* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010), pp. 27-28. Notably, Janet later compared the role of Freudian psychoanalysis with that of animal magnetism—*ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁵⁴ See Kocku von Stuckrad, *A Cultural History of the Soul: Europe and North America from 1870 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), pp. 18-19.

marked divergence of opinion on such matters is emphasised as a means for demarcating the views of the educated professional from those of the public at large:

... a strong movement ... manifest among psychologists and psychiatrists, against all that concerns hypnosis, “secondary personalities,” intelligent psychological automatism, one could almost say against all that deviates from the mental functions recognised for centuries by commonsense. To this is doubtless due the persistent lack of success of Freudianism in our country. *On the contrary*, on the part of the public at large, in the broadest sense of the term, there is to be noted a very lively success by all that touches on the marvellous, in philosophy or in psychology: occultism, telepathy, spiritism, theosophy.²⁵⁵

It is important to bear in mind that the various magnetic movements that developed across France, Germany, Britain and America throughout this period contained many—occasionally conflicting—schools of thought and practice. Nevertheless, stripped to their essentials, this proliferation of approaches can broadly be grouped under three categories, the respective teachings of which can be briefly outlined as follows. Firstly, there was the ‘materialist’ school of mesmerism, as exemplified by the founding figure of Mesmer himself. A second ‘school’ consisted of the disciples of Puységur and Deleuze, otherwise known as the *psycho-fluidists*. Despite its spiritualist proclivities, this ‘school’ maintained that while artificial somnambulism disclosed the existence of a ‘hidden self,’ such knowledge did not extend to providing proof for the existence of discarnate ‘entities’ external to human consciousness. A third category—which itself devolved into a series of sub-categories—operated under a range of rubrics which have come, in more recent times, to be referred to by terms such as ‘esoteric

²⁵⁵ Lalande, cited in Brower, *Unruly Spirits*, p. 139.

magnetism' (Méheust) and 'magnetic gnosis' (Hanegraaff), thereby highlighting their 'mystical' attributes. The study and practice of 'esoteric magnetism' had its nucleus in the city of Lyon (at one time the reputed esoteric capital of France). Its adepts tended to mix ideas of progress with those of eschatology, alchemy and Kabbalah in ways that were in many respects highly subversive to notions of a unilinear Enlightenment historiography. Some practitioners, such as the Chevalier de Barberin, did not subscribe to the idea of entities external to human consciousness, choosing to interpret the efficacy of their activities as being dependent upon a combination of willpower and prayer. Others, such as Jeanne Rochette, purportedly made contact with 'angelic entities' whilst in a state of somnambulistic trance.²⁵⁶

However, it was in Germany that esoteric magnetism was to achieve its apotheosis. Building upon the pre-romantic theologies of light and electricity developed as early as 1765 by figures such as Prokop Divisch, Friedrich Christop Oetinger and Johann Ludwig Fricker, magnetism was frequently adopted by many of the proponents of *Naturphilosophie* as the means by which the somnambulist could be put into a state of rapport with the totality of nature and its contiguous transcendental realms.²⁵⁷ Noted theorists included Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert (1780-1860), author of *Views from the Night Side of Natural Science* (1808) and *The Symbolism of Dreams* (1814).²⁵⁸ Somnambulistic researchers sought to

²⁵⁶ Méheust, 'Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism,' p. 79.

²⁵⁷ *Naturphilosophie* became prominent as a philosophical outlook from around the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. It has been described as a form of 'sacred physics' and its exemplars included figures such as F. W. J. Schelling, Franz von Baader, Carl August von Eschenmayer, Joseph Ennemoser, Gustav Theodor Fechner and Justinus Kerner. Most *Naturphilosophen* tended to share three common beliefs: that nature possesses a history of a mythical order; that spirit and nature are ultimately identical; and that nature as a whole is made up of a web of living correspondences that can be deciphered and integrated into a holistic world-view—see Antoine Faivre, 'Naturphilosophie' in: the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, pp. 822-826. In Fenichel's estimation, 'Freud inherited, directly and indirectly, fundamental aspects of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, particularly his articulation of unconscious drives,' Fenichel, *Schelling, Freud, and the Philosophical Foundations of Psychoanalysis*, p. 13. For a more detailed account of Freud and Jung's indebtedness to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* (mediated via Deleuze), see Barentsen, *Romantic Metasubjectivity*, pp. 41-77.

²⁵⁸ This latter text was cited by Freud in the bibliography for *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Schubert was a Christian theosopher (in the lineage of Jacob Boehme) and an exponent of *Naturphilosophie* whose work

identify an underlying physiological mechanism responsible for the trance state, which they located in a hypothesised opposition between the cerebro-spinal system (believed to be the organ of wakeful rationality predominant in men) and the ganglion system (associated with the feminine and the realm of the nocturnal). The particular form that mesmerism took in German Romanticism was based almost entirely upon this latter theory, which was originally proposed by the physician Johann Christian Reil prior to its appearance in an influential textbook on animal magnetism published by Carl Alexander Ferdinand Kluge in 1811.²⁵⁹ This theory proposed the existence of two separate but complementary nervous systems referred to as the ‘cerebral system’ (brain and spinal marrow) and the ‘ganglion system’ (centred round the solar plexus), which together constituted the organic basis for the conscious and unconscious dimensions of the soul:

According to Reil, two antagonistic nervous systems are simultaneously at work in our body. The cerebral system with the brain as its centre dominates during our waking hours, clearly differentiating between individual senses, coordinating perception and guaranteeing overall rational control. During sleep and related states like the magnetic trance, however, the other, so-called ganglionic system with the solar plexus as its centre takes over, subdues the individual senses and mobilises a synthetic sixth sense, not controlled by reason, but led by intuition and seen as particularly receptive to the overall harmony of the world soul.²⁶⁰

This guiding concept was widely adopted by a range of writers and philosophers including G. W. F. Hegel, Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert and Justinus Kerner, each of whom accepted on

has been described as ‘a precursor of psychoanalysis’. See Patrick Valette, ‘Schubert, Gotthilf Heinrich von,’ in Hanegraaff et al (eds.) *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, p.1043.

²⁵⁹ See Bell, *The German Tradition of Psychology*, pp. 167-170, p. 176.

²⁶⁰ Barkhoff, ‘Romantic Science and Psychology,’ p. 215.

the basis of this theory that it was possible for the percipient, via the ganglion system, to have access to the mysterious ‘nightside’ of nature. However, it was only whilst subject to the artificial state of somnambulistic sleep that the percipient could access the full potential of this ‘nightside’ state of consciousness. Notably, many contemporary observers left accounts of somnambulistic subjects reportedly displaying a wide range of ‘anomalous’ phenomena, including action-at-a-distance; precognition; clairvoyance; the perception of spirits and angelic beings; speaking and writing in archaic and unknown languages; and mystical visions of divine realities.²⁶¹ It was from within this context that ‘somnambulism and somnambules became a strange theological tool, a means of investigating extraterrestrial worlds, a machine for answering metaphysical questions’.²⁶²

Arguably, the most influential Germanic exemplar of esoteric magnetism was the Swabian somnambulist Friederike Hauffe (1801-1829), whose story was immortalised by her biographer the physician and poet Justinus Kerner (1786-1862) in his book, *The Seeress of Prevorst* (1829).²⁶³ Kerner himself had a keen interest in the occult and was the first person to make a systematic attempt to investigate Mesmer’s life. In his medical practice Kerner reportedly encountered cases of what he construed to be possession, which he categorised under the hybrid typology of ‘demonic-magnetic disease,’ and for the treatment of which he proposed a therapy consisting of a peculiar combination of exorcism and magnetism.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, pp. 261-262.

²⁶² Hanegraaff, ‘Magnetic Gnosis,’ p. 120.

²⁶³ Justinus Kerner, *The Seeress of Prevorst* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For additional background, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘A Woman Alone: The Beatification of Friederike Hauffe née Wanner (1801-1829)’ in: Anne-Marie Korte (ed.) *Women and Miracle stories: A Multidisciplinary Exploration* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 211-247. For a helpful overview of Kerner’s life and work, see also Hanegraaff, ‘Kerner, Justinus Andreas Christian,’ in: *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, pp. 660-662. In Hanegraaff’s estimation, ‘There can be little doubt ... about the status of *Die Seherin von Prevorst* as almost certainly the most highly developed representative of a specific perspective on superior or even absolute knowledge that emerged in the context of German Romantic mesmerism in the first half of the 19th century ... to which I have been referring as magnetic gnosis,’ Hanegraaff, ‘Magnetic Gnosis,’ p. 132.

²⁶⁴ Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud*, pp. 201-202.

Kerner conceptualised magnetic somnambulism as existing on a continuum ranging from the occluded and barely perceptible through to transcendental states of *magnetic gnosis* whose nature he elucidated in the following quasi-visionary terms:

In the clearest and highest magnetic condition, there is neither seeing, hearing, nor feeling; they are superseded by something more than all three together—an unerring perception, and the truest penetration into our own life and nature.²⁶⁵

As might be expected, Kerner adhered to the ganglionic theory of somnambulism and cited Jacob Boehme as one of the sources of inspiration for his own insights.²⁶⁶ Kerner argued against a traditional religious supernaturalism insofar as he viewed somnambulism as a part of *Naturphilosophie*, and therefore as constituting a phenomenon that was not inherently ‘supernatural’. On the other hand, he also emphasised that the ‘occult’ powers of nature could not be grasped via a reductive form of rationalism.²⁶⁷ In Ellenberger’s estimation, ‘In spite of their shortcomings, Kerner’s investigations of the seeress were a milestone in the history of dynamic psychiatry’.²⁶⁸ Kerner himself has received recognition as a pioneer through his emphasis on the therapeutic importance of empathy, while his work on the *Kleksographien* in the 1850s prefigures—and may indeed have influenced—Rorschach’s psychological ‘inkblot’ tests (1921).²⁶⁹ At the same time, his work has also been cited as one of the earliest attempts to undertake an empirical investigation into the paranormal via his book-length account of a case of ‘magnetic illness’ acting as the catalyst for an experience of spiritual ‘realities’.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ Kerner, *The Seeress of Prevorst*, p. 25.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4, p. 26.

²⁶⁷ Hanegraaff, ‘Kerner,’ p. 660.

²⁶⁸ Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p. 79.

²⁶⁹ Hanegraaff, ‘A Woman Alone,’ p. 233; Hanegraaff, ‘Kerner,’ p. 661.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Hauffe's case aroused enormous interest throughout Germany and she was visited by a range of esoteric and philosophical luminaries such as Baader, Schelling and von Schubert, as well as by theologians such as David Strauss and Schleiermacher, all of whom took her revelations quite seriously.²⁷¹ In the estimation of Hanegraaff, 'Without for a moment denying the critical and hermeneutical issues involved, we can safely assume that those who were present at Friederike Hauffe's sickbed did indeed witness strange and unusual things happening on a regular basis'.²⁷² While Kerner's writings have been described more generally as '... the ultimate in the spiritistic magnetic tradition,' his book on Hauffe has also been identified as 'the first monograph devoted to an individual patient in the field of dynamic psychiatry'.²⁷³ Consequently, this latter text exemplifies Egil Asprem's claims concerning the seminal role played by the 'philosophy of the unconscious' as a matrix for the '... epistemological concerns in German *Naturphilosophie*, psychological research, and the practices of occultists and spiritualists'.²⁷⁴ Moreover, as Méheust has emphasised:

For mainstream Western culture, animal magnetism was a shock and a challenge, whose magnitude and effects are too often forgotten today ... While the phenomena of somnambulism have never been completely objectified or explained in a satisfying manner, they have certainly stimulated and/or disquieted all aspects of culture. Psychiatry, psychoanalysis, the psychology of altered states of consciousness, philosophy, the history of religion, ethnology, art, literature, and theories of education—all have been affected by this current and still bear its mark.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ Op. cit., pp. 79-81.

²⁷² Hanegraaff, 'A Woman Alone,' p. 216.

²⁷³ Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud*, p. 202; Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, p. 81.

²⁷⁴ Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse 1900-1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 442. Notably, it was a copy of Kerner's *The Seeress of Prevorst* that C.G. Jung chose to present to his mediumistic subject—and cousin—Hélène Preiswerk for her fifteenth birthday in March 1896—see Deidre Bair, *Jung: A Biography* (London: Littlebrown, 2004), p. 50

²⁷⁵ Méheust, 'Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism,' p. 81.

As Méheust correctly diagnosed, psychoanalysis has continued to struggle in its attempts to deal with the implications arising from its coincident dependence upon and disavowal of these earlier mesmeric traditions. As Sigmund Freud was to observe as early as 1888 in a review addressing the work of the Austrian neuro-anatomist Heinrich Obersteiner:

If we accept that a magnet is made to work by the influence of a state of a person then it is not weird to suppose that this person can influence another person, like a magnetised iron rod passes over its influence to another one. This analogy does not reduce the miraculous nature of the fact that a nervous system is able to influence another nervous system through as yet unknown sensory organs. We must admit that proving this idea will contribute something new, as yet unknown to our world-view, and will subvert the so-called borders of the personality.²⁷⁶

Much as in its dealings with telepathy (discussed in the next chapter), psychoanalysis has similarly been ‘set on swallowing *and* simultaneously rejecting the foreign body named Telepathy [or animal magnetism, or somnambulism], for assimilating it and vomiting it without being able to make up its mind to do one or the other’.²⁷⁷ As we shall see in subsequent chapters, while the impact of the mesmeric traditions initially came to be *encrypted* within psychoanalysis under the guise of hypnosis, the transference, and the use of the couch, the subsequent ‘decipherment’ and further development of these conceptual *hieroglyphs*, which was to occur under the aegis of the Hungarian and post-Bionian schools

²⁷⁶ Cited in: Julia Gyimesi, ‘From Spooks to Symbol-Formation: Early Viennese Psychoanalysis and the Occult,’ in: Hans Gerald Hödl & Lukas Pokorny (eds.), *Religion in Austria Vol. 3* (Wien: Praesens Verlag, 2016), p. 51.

²⁷⁷ Jacques Derrida, ‘Telepathy’ [trans. Nicolas Royle], *Oxford Literary Review*, 10 (1988), p. 38.

of psychoanalysis in particular, entailed a *de facto* re-instantiation of these earlier practices translated into a revitalised psychoanalytic context.

CHAPTER THREE: BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE

3.1. Introduction

Freudian psychoanalysis can be situated within an extensive ‘pre-history,’ whose *longue durée* aligns itself to a diverse range of historical influences, including those of shamanism, the therapeutic schools of Ancient Greece, the Christian practice of spiritual direction, Christian Theosophy, German Romanticism and Mesmerism.²⁷⁸ Henri Ellenberger has termed those schools of psychology that prefigured the rise of psychoanalysis as ‘the First Dynamic Psychiatry,’ chronologically situating its activities between the years of 1775-1900. Its primary characteristics included the use of hypnotism as a means for accessing the unconscious and treating mental illness; a preoccupation with disorders such as somnambulism, multiple personality and hysteria; and a model of the mind founded upon ideas of dual consciousness (*dédoublement de la personnalité*) and the existence of subconscious personalities:²⁷⁹

During this time [1882-1900], the main tool of psychological research and therapy was hypnosis; the main psychological phenomenon of interest was somnambulism, of which multiple personality and spiritualism were varieties; and the main psychological disorder was hysteria. Hypnosis, hysteria and spiritualism are all variants of somnambulism, which, in psychological parlance at the turn of the

²⁷⁸ Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Fontana 1994 [1970]), pp. 110-181.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

century, referred to *any* rather complex act performed while asleep, in trance, or in some other “altered state of consciousness”—to use the expression in vogue today.²⁸⁰

What is perhaps most notable about Ellenberger’s periodization of the psychoanalytic *longue durée* is that it establishes the ‘First Dynamic Psychiatry’ as the overarching, pre-existing ‘orthodoxy’ out of which—and in tension with—the theories of Freud and Jung (amongst others) were eventually to make their way to international prominence.

The complex interplay of synergistic, ambivalent, and agonistic dynamics that typified relations between the First Dynamic Psychiatry and its successors is exemplified by the respective roles played F. W. H. Myers (1843-1901) and William James (1842-1910) in the introduction of Breuer and Freud’s ideas on the nature of hysteria to the Anglophone world. However, the difficulties that arose during the course of initial attempts to distinguish the *subliminal self* of Myers and James from the Freudian unconscious have tended to be overlooked.²⁸¹ In the estimation of T. W. Mitchell (1869-1944):

Freud’s Unconscious is in truth not very different from Myers’ Subliminal, but it seems to be more acceptable to the scientific world, in so far (sic) as it has been

²⁸⁰ John R. Haule, ‘From Somnambulism to the Archetypes: The French Roots of Jung’s Split with Freud,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review* 71:4 (1984), p. 638.

²⁸¹ See Philip Kuhn, *Psychoanalysis in Britain, 1893-1913: Histories and Historiography* (London: Lexington, 2017), pp. 5-6; pp. 26-28; p. 294. Kuhn dates the actual introduction of ‘Freud’ and ‘psychoanalysis’ to the membership of *The Society for Psychical Research* to 1909, noting that this initial confusion took the form of a misreading in which Breuer, Freud and Myers’ theories were consistently misaligned with each other. In Kuhn’s estimation, an undue emphasis upon the links conjoining Myers to Freud has contributed to a misreading of the latter’s significance to the detriment of the former whilst obscuring the greater significance of Janet for Myers. In Myers’ estimation, Freud was something of a ‘late entrant’ into a field already explored in some depth by figures such as Gurney, Janet and Myers himself—see Trevor Hamilton, *Immortal Longings: FWH Myers & the Victorian Search for Life after Death* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2009), p. 190.

invoked to account for normal and abnormal phenomena only, and does not lay its supporters open to the implication of belief in supernormal happenings.²⁸²

The process of establishing the context to this confusion will require some comparison to be made between Freud's 1912 paper, 'A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis' and the more expansive concept of the *subliminal self* that was initially developed by Myers and subsequently taken forward in the writings of his friend and colleague, William James.²⁸³

It is notable that Freud chose to publish his first major theorisation of the unconscious in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*.²⁸⁴ While the hypothesis that Freud tacitly construed his conceptualisation of a specifically psychoanalytic unconscious to be in competition with Myer's pre-existing theorisation of the *subliminal self* remains as a subject for debate, it is nonetheless evident that disciplinary anxieties regarding boundary demarcations remained prominent throughout the professional politics of this period.²⁸⁵

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the most intense activity of scientific psychology through giant symposia, where, notably, terms like 'unconscious' and 'subconscious' were defined...on one side stood (at least) Jean

²⁸² Cited in Julia Gyimesi, 'The Problem of Demarcation: Psychoanalysis & the Occult,' *American Imago*, 66:4 (2009), p. 467. I am indebted to Gyimesi's paper for drawing my attention to the importance played by demarcatory disputes for the infiltration of a specifically 'psychoanalytic' model of the unconscious by its occluded 'esoteric' other.

²⁸³ See Eugene Taylor, *William James on Consciousness beyond the Margin* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996); Krister Dylan Knapp, *William James: Psychical Research and the Challenge of Modernity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

²⁸⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'A note on the unconscious in psychoanalysis,' (1912) in: *On Metapsychology vol. 11* (Penguin: London, 1991), pp. 45-57 [SE 12, pp. 255-266]. The request for Freud to submit his paper appears to have been instigated by T. W. Mitchell primarily for the purpose of providing clarification concerning the distinctive nature of the Freudian unconscious, as contrasted with those competing models of the 'subconscious' that were prevalent at the time—see Kuhn, *Psychoanalysis in Britain*, p. 323. Kuhn is notably critical of Keely's contention that Freud's submission of this paper was motivated by a perceived rivalry on his part with the deceased Myers' theory of the subliminal mind—see *ibid.*, pp. 327-328.

²⁸⁵ Gyimesi, 'The Problem of Demarcation'.

Martin Charcot, Janet, and Freud, for all of whom the content of the unconscious and subconscious was negative and therefore had to be rejected. On the other side stood (at least) Myers, William James, Théodore Flournoy, and Jung, for whom the content of the subconscious was positive since it allowed a form of awareness beyond consciousness.²⁸⁶

Such disagreements constituted but one variant of more longstanding attempts to delegitimize the ‘nightside’ of psychological research as part of a wider agenda to bolster the discipline’s scientific credibility. These efforts included strategies of genealogical occlusion to which the various magnetic traditions were subjected during the course of their ‘de-occultization’ into the medicalised and secularised practice of hypnosis.²⁸⁷

While such developments were presented by their exponents as being ideologically ‘progressive’ in nature, there is nonetheless reason to suspect that their underlying motivations may have been—to a degree that is necessarily difficult to determine—concurrently motivated by a disavowed melange of fears, anxieties and repressions of a more fundamentally irrational nature.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Nathalie Pilard, ‘C. G. Jung and intuition: from the mindscape of the paranormal to the heart of psychology,’ *The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 63:1 (2018) p. 67.

²⁸⁷ See J. P. Keeley, ‘Subliminal promptings: Psychoanalytic theory and the Society for Psychical Research,’ *American Imago* 58 (2001) 767-791; Kuhn, *Psychoanalysis in Britain, 1893-1913*, pp. 327-330; Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 40-41. On the role of the ‘nightside’ in German Romantic psychology and the origins of Jungian analytical psychology, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 262-264, pp. 285-289.

²⁸⁸ Or in the honest (albeit not very ‘rational’) words of the American neurologist George M. Beard, for ‘logical, well-trained, truth-loving minds, the only security against spiritism is hiding or running away’ (Beard, 1879), cited in Andreas Sommer, ‘Are you afraid of the dark? Notes on the psychology of belief in histories of science and the occult,’ *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling* 18: 2 (2016), p. 114.

... the boundary disputes between psychology and the study of the paranormal ... increasingly involved the ‘psychologization’ and ‘pathologisation’ of psychical research in the Imperial and inter-war periods ... Unable to come to terms with the paranormal ontologically ... German psychologists attempted to transform paranormal phenomena and those who studied them into legitimate objects of research, thereby, undermining their threat not only to psychology, but also to stable notions of history and self.²⁸⁹

Moreover, this polemic dispute mirrored wider debates concerning the strategic implementation of a psychologised world-view to promote the secularisation of earlier modes of thinking historically aligned to ‘spiritist’ ontologies.²⁹⁰

It was during this period that figures such as Charcot and his associates ‘rediscovered’ the associations between hypnotism and the purportedly ‘occult’ phenomena previously explored by the mesmerists, and subsequently ‘forgotten’ by their successors.²⁹¹ Although Freud made scant reference to these earlier developments in his own writings, the milieu of Charcot’s Salpêtrière was nonetheless rife with speculations concerning the alleged links between hypnotism and ‘occult’ phenomena; the literature of ‘animal magnetism’ and ‘mesmerism’ being otherwise well-known to him.²⁹² This confluence of ‘nightside’ currents evoked

²⁸⁹ Heather Wolfram, *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychological Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870-1939* (New York: Rodopi, 2009), p. 30 n.54.

²⁹⁰ Rhodri Hayward, *Resisting History: Religious transcendence and the invention of the unconscious* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 63.

²⁹¹ See Courtenay Raia, *The New Prometheans: Faith Science, And The Supernatural Mind in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2019) for an excellent account of these developments.

²⁹² See Richard Reichbart, *The Paranormal Surrounds Us: Psychic Phenomena in Literature, Culture and Psychoanalysis* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019), p. 82. For a detailed historical account of the alleged associations between hypnotic trance and paranormal phenomena, see Eric Dingwall (ed.), *Abnormal hypnotic phenomena* [4 volumes] (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968). A search of the CD-Rom catalogue of Freud’s library returned twenty-three books/articles dealing with ‘animal magnetism’ and five books/articles dealing with ‘mesmerism’. A total of forty-seven books/articles on hypnotism (excluding items beginning with ‘hypnotism and’) were also identified: see J. Keith Davies & Gerhard Fichtner (eds.) *Freud’s*

powerful emotional reactions in many of the more avowedly scientifically-minded interlocutors. Their ensuing responses not infrequently gravitated around an affective mosaic made up of fascination, uncanniness and secrecy, resulting in disavowed feelings of shame, accompanied by a concomitant fear of ‘contamination’ should the unwary visitant draw too close to the flame.²⁹³

However, in order to contextualise these developments more thoroughly, it will be necessary to undertake a brief excursus into some of the more recent revisionist historiographies that seek to explicitly situate the development of Freudian psychoanalysis within the ‘nightside’ milieu of the so-called ‘dark Enlightenment’.²⁹⁴

3.2. ‘A gnosis of symbols’—the role of the ‘Nightside’ in the formation of Freudian psychoanalysis²⁹⁵

Whilst not seeking to dispute either the accuracy—or the legitimacy—of Freud’s self-identification as a partisan of the *Aufklärung*, to the extent that he was simultaneously heir to the mesmeric, Romantic and (to a markedly more ambiguous degree) Roman Catholic

Library: A Comprehensive Catalogue/Freuds Bibliothek: Vollständiger Katalog (Introductory catalogue & CD-Rom: the Freud Museum London & Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 2006). It is notable that as early as 1887, Freud made reference in a review to the experimental use of hypnosis as a means for dramatically improving the hearing capacity of a number of young boys who were suffering from deafness—see Mark Solms, ‘A Previously-Untranslated Review by Freud of an Article reporting an Hypnotic Experiment,’ *The International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 17 (1990), pp. 365-366.

²⁹³ See Thomas Rabeyron & Renaud Evrard, ‘Historical and contemporary perspectives on occultism in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence,’ *Recherches en psychoanalyse* 13:1 (2012) p. 108.

²⁹⁴ See Joel Whitebook, *Freud: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Freud in His Time and Ours* (London: Harvard University Press, 2016).

²⁹⁵ ‘When psychoanalysis “forgets” its own historicity, that is, its internal relation to conflicts of power and position, it becomes either a mechanism of drives, a dogmatism of discourse, or a gnosis of symbols,’ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 10.

traditions, he can also be construed as an exemplar of the ‘dark Enlightenment’.²⁹⁶ This term was originally coined by the philosopher Yirmiyahu Yovel to denote ‘a deeper, conflicted, disconsolate, and even tragic yet still emancipatory tradition within the broader movement of the Enlightenment’.²⁹⁷ Viewed from this perspective, Freud’s ambivalent engagement with Counter-Enlightenment currents can be seen as a part of a wider creative struggle to navigate a *tertium quid* that sought to transcend a polarised understanding of Romantic and Enlightenment discourses and world-views:

Recent research into esotericism sees a general structural element of Enlightenment discourse, in which the fascination with the dark and irrational, as well as its resolution in the light of understanding, represents a crucial point ... It shows that the glorification of enlightenment and knowledge as it was practiced by many intellectuals in the eighteenth century in fact did not link up primarily with Descartes’ models of reason or Kant’s limits of reason, but rather to Renaissance authors’ search for the ‘Light of Truth’. Through the linking of esotericism and enlightenment we can see the entanglement of discourses of reason with discourses of *higher* knowledge, perfect knowledge, and a truth that transcended simple understanding for those who participated in it.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Whitebook, *Freud*, pp. 10-12; Roudinesco, *Freud*, pp. 215-232, p. 71. For an intriguing account of the ‘genealogy of the myth of the Enlightenment,’ see Jason Å. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (London: University of Chicago, 2017), pp. 71-72. On the topic of Freud’s ‘positivism,’ and its limitations, see Whitebook, *Freud*, pp. 398-399. In the estimation of Cornelius Castoriadis, Freud’s ‘... scientific mirage was a vital and even fertile illusion,’ cited in *ibid.*, p. 96. On the subliminal ‘influence’ of Roman Catholicism on Freud, see Paul C. Vitz, *Sigmund Freud’s Christian Unconscious* (New York: Guilford Press, 1988).

²⁹⁷ Whitebook, *Freud*, p. 11.

²⁹⁸ Kocku von Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion: An Historical Study of Discursive Change 1800-2000* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), p. 69.

This underlying imbrication of ostensibly divergent intellectual currents can be thought of as serving an apotropaic purpose, insofar as the ‘irrational’ elements thereby invoked could—by virtue of this process of conceptual superimposition—subsequently become incorporated into a more expansive and less reified conception of reason. In this respect, it is striking how, in spite of the recurrence of ‘hagiographical’ attempts to portray Freud as the quintessential Victorian gentleman-scientist, psychoanalysis has itself nonetheless managed to take on some of the attributes of a syncretic *tertium quid* in which the tensional energies of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment discourses synergistically converge with each other through a bringing together of conscious ‘rationality’ with its ‘nightside’ *other*.²⁹⁹

While it is true that Freud’s publications on telepathy drew upon the paradigm of a dynamic unconscious powered by instinctual drives, it is also evident that his private views on such topics could be at considerable variance with his more public avowals of an explanatory reductionism.³⁰⁰ Even so, while Freud explicitly advocated ‘an urge towards de-occultization,’ he nonetheless remained cognizant of the extent to which his conscious aims were recurrently undermined by his only partially repressed attraction towards the ‘occult’.³⁰¹ Freud maintained a lucid awareness of his own ambivalence on the matter of publishing on such topics.³⁰² Indeed, his insights on this issue could be recruited to support the hypothesis

²⁹⁹ See, for example, Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: The Last Phase 1919-1939* (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p.408 in which Jones describes a series of late night discussions with Freud on topics of an occult or uncanny nature. At the conclusion to one of these discussions, Freud’s rejoinder to Jones’ scepticism was as follows: ‘I don’t like it at all myself, but there is some truth in it’. What is notable throughout these exchanges is the impression of Jones’s barely concealed anxiety that Freud’s ostensible jocularity might disguise a more serious underlying intent.

³⁰⁰ See Vitz, *Sigmund Freud’s Christian Unconscious*, p. 157. See also Whitebook, *Freud*, p. 159 for an account of Loewald’s seminal distinction between Freud’s ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ positions.

³⁰¹ Roudinesco, *Freud*, p. 275. Notably, Freud identified thought-transference as being one of only two themes (the second being countertransference) that ‘always discomposed’ him—see Paul Roazen, *Freud and His Followers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 232.

³⁰² Reichbart, *The Paranormal Surrounds Us*, p. 108. While Freud had initially intended to present his first paper on ‘thought-transference’ to a select group of his colleagues at a meeting in the Hartz Mountains in 1921, he somehow managed to misplace his notes. While a subsequent version of the paper was eventually published in 1933, the original draft only came to light again in 2010 after its discovery by Maria Pierri—see

that his motives for embarking upon his 1912 paper on the unconscious not only constituted a theoretical intervention intended to distinguish his approach from those of his competitors, but also served the more oblique function of erecting a conceptual *bulwark against the black [tide of mud] of occultism*.³⁰³ Otto Rank adumbrated on this theme in the following terms:

Freud essentially eliminated the soul. By acknowledging the unconscious he acknowledged the realm of the soul; but by his materialistic explanation of the unconscious he denied the soul. Consciousness, obviously, contains *something* more, as well as something different, than just the data of the external world. Freud attempted to explain this “something more” out of the unconscious; but he takes the unconscious itself again to be merely a reflection of reality, a remnant of the external world. But the unconscious, too, contains more than past reality; it contains and encompasses something unreal, extra-sensory, which from the start was inherent in the concept of soul.³⁰⁴

From the 1920s onwards, Freud’s researches gradually came to orient themselves around three specific areas of enquiry, namely: his speculative investigations into *eros* and *thanatos*, which he uneasily sought to align with his development of a structural model of the psyche; an exploration into the social dynamics of power in groups; and a conflicted attempt to delve

Richard Skues, ‘Freud and the Disenchantment of Telepathy: Thought-Transference Analysed and the History of an Unpublished Paper,’ *Psychoanalysis and History* 23:3 (2021), pp. 267-295. See also Marsha Aileen Hewitt, *Freud on Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 100. As Derrida remarked, it was not merely coincidental that none of Freud’s telepathy ‘lectures’ were ever in fact ‘delivered,’ and were not infrequently ‘lost,’ see Reichbart, *The Paranormal Surrounds Us*, p. 107. This sense of Freud’s underlying ambivalence is further compounded when we consider that he could never quite bring himself to pay his membership dues to the Society for Psychical Research—see Roger Luckhurst, ‘Something Tremendous, Something Elemental,’ in: Peter Buse & Andrew Stott (eds.) *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999) p. 68, n.39.

³⁰³ See C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (London: Flamingo, 1983), p. 173.

³⁰⁴ Otto Rank, ‘Psychology and the Soul,’ from *The Belief in the Soul and Psychology* cited in: Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 128-129.

into the ‘nightside’ phenomenon of telepathy.³⁰⁵ Despite his allegiance to Enlightenment values, Freud nonetheless formed multiple identifications with a range of Counter-Enlightenment tropes and exemplars, including those of the Faustian drama of the Mephistophelian ‘pact,’ the penumbra of mystery surrounding ancient mythologies, and the dangers thereby encountered through the surmounting of reason by the passions:

[Freud] belonged to the tradition of “dark Enlightenment” through his ability to let himself be haunted by the demoniacal, the occult, the *pharmakon*, or the “uncanny” (*Unheimliche*) and then immediately distance himself from it by invoking the ideal of science ... it is within this dialectic play between darkness and light that we can situate ... a will to transform Romanticism into science.³⁰⁶

However, it remains a matter of debate as to whether or to what extent such a transformation was ever in fact achieved. In this regard, it has been proposed that Freud suffered from a series of neurotic fantasies featuring the Devil that concluded with a fantasied ‘demonic pact,’ the contents of which drew upon an amalgam of sources, including those of Goethe’s *Faust* as well as the documentary materials provided by the European witch trials of the seventeenth-century.³⁰⁷ As early as 1897, Freud wrote to his friend Wilhelm Fleiss in the following evocative terms:

I am beginning to grasp an idea: it is as though in the perversions, of which hysteria is the negative, we have before us a remnant of a primeval sexual cult, which once was—perhaps still is—a religion in the Semitic East [Moloch, Astarte] ... I dream,

³⁰⁵ Roudinesco, *Freud*, p. 211.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

³⁰⁷ ‘I propose that Freud had neurotic fantasies about the Devil and that at some time, whilst fantasizing, he concluded a pact,’ Vitz, *Sigmund Freud’s Christian Unconscious*, p. 155.

therefore, of a primeval devil religion with rites that are carried on secretly, and understand the harsh therapy of the witches' judges. Connecting links abound.³⁰⁸

Moreover, Freud explicitly identified with the figure of Goethe (actualising this identification to the extent of winning the Goethe prize in 1930), and drew upon Goethe's *Faust* as a primal *ur-text* or thematic *palimpsest*, traces of which may be discerned throughout the *corpus* of his own writings.³⁰⁹ More specifically, parallel relations between the 'witch theme' in Freud's work and what has been described as his personal 'witch psychology' have been remarked upon at length in the scholarly literature.³¹⁰ It has been suggested that it was Freud's use of cocaine that acted as one of the major catalysts through which he was able to subvert by chemical means the order of his own rationality, thereby bringing into the foreground of his consciousness the 'nightside' of the daimonic and the *unheimlich* in psychoanalysis.³¹¹

Intriguingly, Freud first took cocaine on the 30th of April, 1884, which is to say, *Walpurgisnacht*. Like Faust, Freud too was enamoured by the idea of a drug-induced rejuvenation that intensified the libido.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (ed. & trans.), *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss (1887-1904)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 227. See also Kathleen Duffy, *Freud's Early Psychoanalysis, Witch Trials and the Inquisitorial Method* (Abington: Routledge, 2020), pp. 16-17 for an exegesis of this passage and its ensuing implications for the early development of psychoanalytic theory and practice.

³⁰⁹ Sabine Prokhoris, *The Witch's Kitchen: Freud, Faust, and the Transference* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 33-34; Paul Bishop, *Analytical Psychology and German Classical Aesthetics: Goethe, Schiller and Jung vol. 2* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 9-32. Jung, too, was profoundly influenced by Goethe's *oeuvre*, as is elucidated by Bishop at length in this same text. Indeed, Jung was even rumoured to be a direct descendant of Goethe's—see Deidre Bair, *Jung: A Biography* (London: Little, Brown, 2004), p. 8.

³¹⁰ Vitz, *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious*, p. 148, pp. 101-171; Duffy, *Freud's Early Psychoanalysis, Witch Trials and The Inquisitorial Method*. On Freud's deployment of and indebtedness to Goethe's *Faust*, see especially Prokhoris, *The Witch's Kitchen*.

³¹¹ Roudinesco, *Freud*, pp. 39-40. It has been remarked that 'The white power contained both the magic that tempted and excited [Freud] and the antidote to the anxiety that the magic aroused' Whitebook, *Freud*, p. 116. For a useful compilation of Freud's writings on cocaine, see David Carter (ed.) *Sigmund Freud on Cocaine* (London: Hesperus Press, 2011). On the role of drugs in occultism, see Dan Merkur, 'Drugs and the Occult' in: Christopher Partridge (ed.) *The Occult World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 672-680.

³¹² Vitz, *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious*, pp. 110-112; Roudinesco, *Freud*, p. 39.

If we can accept that theory ‘is always first and foremost local emotional politics,’ and that ‘sexuality and the unconscious were the new, scientifically prestigious words for the occult,’ then we can also begin to grasp the importance of the highly charged exchanges that took place between Freud, Jung and Ferenczi from 1908-1914 over the precise meaning of the ‘occult,’ and the significance that should be ascribed to it with regards to the future of psychoanalysis.³¹³ Hence, it is to these exchanges that we shall now turn.

3.3. The ‘Occulted’ relations of Freud, Jung and Ferenczi (1908-1914)

It is perhaps not an exaggeration to suppose that the interest of Jung and Ferenczi in spiritualism represented the ‘return of the repressed’ in Freud’s life and psychoanalysis.³¹⁴

The consequences for psychoanalysis arising from the acrimonious dissolution of relations between Freud, Jung and Ferenczi cannot be over-estimated. Indeed, there are grounds for supposing that the combined effects of these ruptures upon future generations of psychoanalysts and analytical psychologists resulted in their becoming the inheritors of a trans-generationally ‘encrypted’ trauma whose symptomatic expression was enacted under the guise of theory.³¹⁵ In the estimation of one commentator: ‘The parting broke Freud’s

³¹³ Adam Phillips, *Terrors and Experts* (London: Faber, 1995), p. 23, p. 19; Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 118. See also Thomas Rabeyron & Renaud Evrard, ‘Historical and contemporary perspectives on occultism in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence,’ *Recherches en psychoanalyse* 13:1 (2012); Tom Keve, ‘The Jung-Ferenczi Dossier,’ *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 75 (2015).

³¹⁴ Julia Gyimesi, ‘Why “Spiritism?”’ *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 97 (2016), p. 362.

³¹⁵ On the use of the term *encrypted* in this context, see the following: ‘Abraham and Torok view the unintelligibility they encounter in their patients as psychically motivated disturbances of meaning ... One of these mechanisms, which they call cryptonymy, inhibits the emergence of meaning by concealing the significant link within a chain of words,’ Nicolas T. Rand, ‘Introduction’ in: Nicolas Abraham & Maria Torok, *The*

heart, but it broke Jung's spirit'.³¹⁶ If the initial relations between Freud and Jung were not of an already sufficient intensity, these tensions were further exacerbated due to the combination of Oedipal and sibling rivalry dynamics arising between Carl Jung ('the Crown Prince') and Sándor Ferenczi ('the son-in-law Freud wished he had').³¹⁷ As early as 1907 Jung had written to Ferenczi to advise him that he had been '... made Honorary Fellow of the American Institute for Scientific Research, a society that primarily studies psychology and occult phenomena'.³¹⁸ By 1908 Jung was providing Ferenczi with an outline of his experiments with hypnagogic states (an account which might arguably denote one of his first explicit references to the embryonic concept of 'active imagination'). In 1910 Ferenczi actually consulted a somnambulistic medium—rather than, say, a psychoanalyst—for advice on how to manage his relations with Jung.³¹⁹ By 1911 Freud, Jung and Ferenczi were in regular correspondence with each other on matters relating to the occult.³²⁰

Tom Keve has argued that a complex series of disputes concerning the nature of sexuality and the meaning of the occult (exacerbated by an unresolved negative paternal transference on Jung's part) lay at the heart of the eventual rupture between Freud and Jung.³²¹ Notably, many of their respective differences concerning the meaning and significance of the libido concept were fought on the basis of data drawn from occultism, religion and mythology.³²² While the elder Jung retrospectively interpreted Freud as treating sexuality as though it were

Shell and The Kernel [ed., trans. & with an introduction by Nicolas T. Rand] (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 17.

³¹⁶ Nandor Fodor, *Freud, Jung and Occultism* (New York: University Books Inc., 1971), p. 111. On the topic of Jung's purported 'psychosis' as constituting a *de facto* 'trance illness,' see Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Awakened Ones: Phenomenology of Visionary Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 409-439.

³¹⁷ See Tom Keve, 'The Jung-Ferenczi Dossier,' *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 75 (2015), p. 99.

³¹⁸ Keve, 'The Jung-Ferenczi Dossier,' p. 96.

³¹⁹ Rabeyron & Evrard, 'Historical and contemporary perspectives on Occultism,' p. 102.

³²⁰ Keve, 'The Jung-Ferenczi Dossier,' p. 98, p. 100.

³²¹ Fodor, *Freud, Jung and Occultism*, pp. 110-113. See also the following: 'In psychoanalysis the supernatural returns as the erotic,' Phillips, *Terrors and Experts*, p. 19.

³²² F. X. Charet, *Spiritualism and the Foundations of C. G. Jung's Psychology* (Albany: SUNY, 1993), p. 199.

a kind of *numinosum*, it is nonetheless evident that during this earlier period it was Jung himself who was struggling with the ‘numinous’ powers of sexuality, as embodied in the vicissitudes of his erotic relationship with his ex-patient, Sabina Spielrein, in regards to which Freud—somewhat reluctantly—found himself assigned the role of ‘arbitrator’ cum ‘conciliator’ between the various disputants embroiled in this saga.³²³ Moreover, these disagreements may have evoked within Freud anxieties around questions of demarcation and legitimation. By emphasising sexuality as one of the linchpins to his theory of the unconscious, Freud firmly grounded his model of the mind within biology, thereby demarcating its *modus operandi* from the various ‘spiritualist’ schools active within the milieu of the contiguous discipline of psychical research.³²⁴ It was in the midst of these interpersonal tensions that Freud continued to wrestle with his own internal struggles arising from his conflicted fascination with the occult.³²⁵ As Borch-Jacobson has acutely observed:

Their [psychiatrists’ and therapists’] intervention is part of the ‘etiological equation’ of the syndromes that they claim to observe from the outside. [As well as the historians of psychiatry] they must, if they want to remain faithful to their improbable ‘object,’ study the complex interactions from which those syndromes and those theories emerge, somewhere between the doctors, the patients and the society that

³²³ John Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), pp. 221-231 ff. The reference to Jung’s assertion that Freud treated sexuality as a *numinosum* is an allusion to the account given by Jung in his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. For an account of the cautions and caveats that should be applied to the material contained in this text, see Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the making of modern psychology: the dream of a science* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 22-26.

³²⁴ See Gyimesi, ‘The Problem of Demarcation,’ p. 460. See also Heather Wolffram, *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870-1939* (New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 54-62 and Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 238-239 on the tensions that existed between ‘spiritualist’ and ‘psychological’ approaches to psychical research.

³²⁵ Fodor, *Freud, Jung and Occultism*, p. 110; Rabeyron & Evrard, ‘Historical and contemporary perspectives on occultism,’ p. 108.

surrounds them. In short, they must study the making of psychiatric history, and understand that they participate in it.³²⁶

For Jung, psychoanalysis seemed to offer an opportunity to deepen the quest for his elusive ‘second self,’ a task he had initially embarked upon under the auspices of his researches into the occult.³²⁷ In his correspondence with Freud, Jung referred to the evidence from psychical research that might be utilised to provide confirmatory evidence for Freud’s own findings.³²⁸ Eventually (in response to a request initially made by Jung), Freud delegated to Jung and Ferenczi the task of taking psychoanalysis into the realm of the occult. On the 11th May 1909 Freud wrote to Ferenczi advising him as follows:

Jung writes that we must also conquer occultism and requests permission to undertake a campaign in the realm of mysticism. I see that both of you can’t be restrained. You should at least proceed in harmony with each other; these are dangerous expeditions, and I can’t go along there.³²⁹

Despite this disclaimer, in 1911 Freud joined the British Society for Psychical Research and attended a series of séances accompanied by Ferenczi. That same year Freud wrote to Jung about his own experience of the ‘occult’ in the following emotive terms:

In matters of occultism I have grown humble since the great lesson Ferenczi’s experiences gave me. I promise to believe anything that can be made to look

³²⁶ Borch-Jacobson, cited in: Nathalie Pilard, ‘C. G. Jung and intuition: from the mindscape of the paranormal to the heart of psychology,’ *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 63: 1 (2018), p. 71.

³²⁷ Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method*, pp. 111-112; C. G. Jung, *Psychology and the Occult* (Abington: Routledge, 2008 [1902]).

³²⁸ William McGuire, *The Freud/Jung Letters* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 85 [letter 50J, 02/11/1907].

³²⁹ Freud to Ferenczi [1908-1914, letter 216], in: Keve, ‘The Jung-Ferenczi Dossier,’ p. 100.

reasonable. I shall not do so gladly, that you know. But my hubris has been shattered.³³⁰

Regardless of this purported ‘humbling’ on Freud’s part, his exquisite oscillations on this topic nonetheless remained as a recurrent feature throughout these exchanges and beyond, with incipient tensions between Freud and Jung regarding the significance that should be ascribed to the ‘occult’ exemplified by their respective reactions to a series of poltergeist-like phenomena (memorably articulated by Jung in his impromptu neologism, *catalytic exteriorisation phenomenon*) that reportedly occurred during the course of a visit made by Jung to Freud’s home in March 1909.³³¹ Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, we can discern throughout the course of this three-way correspondence the nascent stirrings of fundamental psychoanalytic conceptualisations concerning countertransference and intersubjectivity.³³² Moreover, as Freud remarked in his correspondence with Ferenczi, once it is accepted that the telepathic ‘receiver’ must necessarily be subject to unconscious processes of distortion, then the application of psychoanalytic hermeneutics will necessarily be required if the true meaning of any psychical transmission from ‘sender’ to ‘receiver’ is to be accurately decoded.³³³

While the much-debated significance of the so-called ‘Kreuzlingen gesture’ has entered into analytical mythology as the proximate ‘flash-point’ marking the end of Freud and Jung’s

³³⁰ McGuire, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, p. 227, Freud to Jung [260f, 15/06/1911]. Freud’s remarks may also allude to certain experiments pertaining to ‘clairvoyance’ and ‘telepathy’ conducted by Ferenczi in 1909 on a Berlin psychic called Frau Seidler and a ‘somnambulist’ named Mrs Jelinek. For more on this episode, see Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, pp. 198-199.

³³¹ See McGuire, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, pp. 143-146. & C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (London: Flamingo, 1983), pp. 178-179.

³³² Rabeyron & Evrard, ‘Historical & contemporary perspectives on occultism,’ p. 103.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p. 101. For a critique of the ‘sender-receiver’ model of telepathy in psychoanalysis, see Reichbart, *The Paranormal Surrounds Us*, pp. 111-112.

friendship, in retrospect Jung came to consider that it was their fundamental divergence on questions concerning sexuality and the occult that constituted the decisive factor leading to their eventual estrangement:

I can still recall vividly how Freud said to me, “My dear Jung, promise me never to abandon the sexual theory. That is the most essential thing of all. You see, we must make a dogma of it, an unshakeable bulwark.” He said that to me with great emotion, in the tone of a father saying, “And promise me this one thing, my dear son: that you will go to church every Sunday.” In some astonishment I asked him, “A bulwark—against what?” To which he replied, “Against the black tide of mud”—and here he hesitated for a moment, then added—“of occultism.”³³⁴

It is evident from Jung’s retrospective account that he associated ‘occultism’ not only with those forms of knowledge that he considered psychoanalysis to be incapable of digesting, but as also constituting a ‘threat’ against which Freud felt he had to defend himself:

What Freud seemed to mean by “occultism” was virtually everything that philosophy and religion, including the rising contemporary science of parapsychology, had learned about the psyche ... Although I did not properly understand it then, I had observed in Freud the eruption of unconscious religious factors. Evidently he wanted my aid in erecting a barrier against these threatening unconscious contents.³³⁵

³³⁴ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 173. As has been observed, ‘Freud is fascinating ... because he hesitated between both revelation and concealment ... we can learn much about the mechanisms of occult repression from the master theorist of repression himself,’ Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, p. 181. On the background to the ‘Kreuzlingen gesture,’ see Maguire, *Freud/Jung Letters*, pp. 273, 275, 278, 279, 283, 295 and Kerr, *A Dangerous Method*, pp. 410, 413, 423, 428, 438.

³³⁵ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, pp. 173-174. For a more sceptical reading of the wider context to this dispute as reported by Jung, see Fodor, *Freud, Jung and Occultism*, p. 110, in which Fodor comments that ‘It is

One notable feature of Jung's remark concerns his passing reference to parapsychology as a 'rising contemporary science,' an observation that identifies psychical research as constituting a significant academic discipline during the time when this dispute originally occurred. Moreover, his remarks highlight the extent to which Freud's attitude towards the occult was highly conflicted and subject to a plethora of defensive procedures. In Jung's estimation:

... the sexual theory was just as occult, that is to say, just as unproven a hypothesis, as many other speculative views ... Although, for Freud, sexuality was undoubtedly a *numinosum*, his terminology and theory seemed to define it exclusively as a biological function. It was only the emotionality with which he spoke of it that revealed the deeper elements reverberating within him.³³⁶

Following his break with Freud, Jung set out on an initiatory journey (charted in his *Black* and *Red* books) that paralleled—to some degree—the intellectual itinerary undertaken by his friend and mentor Theodore Flournoy (1854-1920), whose own work on psychical research had traversed a comparable trajectory, beginning with a process of psychological demystification and ending in a renewed commitment to a reconstituted idea of 'occult forces'.³³⁷ Jung was subsequently to emphasise (citing William James) that in his estimation it was Myers who in 1886 'discovered' the unconscious.³³⁸ Indeed echoes of Myers'

hard to believe this statement as Jung reported it in *Memories*. Freud did not consider occultism a black tide, nor did he want to make a canonic theory about sex'.

³³⁶ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflection*, pp. 173-175.

³³⁷ See Luckhurst, 'Something Tremendous,' p. 59.

³³⁸ See C.G. Jung, 'On the nature of the psyche' in: H. Read et al. (Eds.) *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung: Vol. 8. The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969 2nd ed., [1947; rev. 1954], pp. 237-279, n. 23.

influence on Jung can be discerned in a recent account of the concept of Jungian ‘intuition’ that has highlighted the presence of a four-fold psychological hermeneutic in which the Jungian concept of the *unterbewusst* (an intermediate region located between the unconscious and consciousness) is identified as the realm associated with ‘paranormal’ intuitions.³³⁹

3.4. ‘Before and after Science’: Freud and psychical research

If I had my life to live over again I should devote my life to psychical research rather than to psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud to Hereward Carrington, 1921).³⁴⁰

Recent studies have tended to present nineteenth-century psychical research as an emergent discipline inhabiting a hybrid realm conjoining religion, literature, philosophy and the nascent discipline of psychology to empirical science.³⁴¹ It is from within the tensional matrix created by these respective disciplines that we can begin to discern the trajectory of a materialist ideology active in both French and German fin-de-siècle psychology, which

³³⁹ Pilard, ‘C. G. Jung and intuition,’ pp. 66-68. Notably, Pilard’s ideas on intuition draw upon a threefold typology provided by Antoine Faivre (2008), in which he delineates a hierarchical ‘occult’ epistemology beginning with phenomena associated with paranormal research, through to ‘higher’ faculties enabling contact with realms of the angelic, the demonic and the dead, before culminating in the highest ‘visionary’ faculties of a purportedly ‘gnostic’ character. On the significance of Myers’ work for Jung, see Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, pp. 125-128, p. 261.

³⁴⁰ Jones, *Freud*, p. 419. However, there are slight but significant differences between Jones’s account of this correspondence and Fodor’s (who was the original source for Jones). Fodor’s transcription of the original Photostat of Freud’s letter reads as follows: ‘Dear Sir, I am not one of those who, from the outset, disapprove of the study of so-called occult psychological phenomena as unscientific, as unworthy, or even as dangerous. If I were at the beginning of a scientific career, instead of, as now, at its end I would perhaps chooses no other field of work, in spite of all difficulties,’ cited in Fodor, *Freud, Jung, and Occultism*, p. 84. Notably, eight years later when Freud was questioned regarding the accuracy of his assertion (originally made in 1921), he initially denied its veracity, only to have his denial disproved by a photostat provided by Hereward Carrington.

³⁴¹ Wolfram, *The Stepchildren of Science*, p. 27. Other useful histories of psychical research, the findings from which have been drawn upon in the following pages include Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (London: John Hopkins, 2004) and Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

sought to bring about the programmatic ‘reduction’ of *psychical* phenomena (including its experimental ‘subjects’ such as somnambulists and mediums) into the pathologized ‘objects’ of scientific research, thereby obviating any potential dangers posed by competing notions of a ‘transcendental subject’ extraterritorially ‘decentred’ outside the parameters of a materialist ontology.³⁴²

Newly evolved disciplines, such as Carl du Prel’s ‘transcendental psychology,’ utilised trance states to access unconscious mental capacities construed as being ‘transcendental’ in nature due to the hypothesised existence of an implied organizing intelligence known as the ‘transcendental subject’.³⁴³ However, by the middle of the 1890s, the desire on the part of the ‘physiological’ psychologists to create a clearer demarcation that would assist in distinguishing their own research agendas from those of the more outré variants of fin de siècle occultism led to the formation of a hybrid approach known as ‘critical occultism,’ the axioms of which were premised upon more naturalistic modes of explanation.³⁴⁴ This development contributed to a retreat from the animist paradigm hitherto characteristic of German psychical research, leading to a shift towards a materialistic psychology operationalised to establish a series of ‘reductive’ explanations for paranormal phenomena.³⁴⁵

The process of genealogical occlusion that ensued has been aptly summarised as follows:

³⁴² For German developments, see Wolfram, *The Stepchildren of Science*, p. 30 n. 54; p. 50. For a very helpful overview of the French *psychologie Physiologique* (as well as its counter-currents in French psychiatry), see Raia, *The New Prometheans*, pp. 181ff.

³⁴³ Carl du Prel, *The Philosophy of Mysticism Vol. 1* [intro. Rico Sneller; trans. C.C. Massey] (Hermitix Pub. Re-edition., 2022 [1885]).

³⁴⁴ ‘Physiological’ psychology referred to a development in the latter part of the nineteenth-century that sought to transform psychology from a sub-discipline of philosophy into a fully-fledged empirical science by emphasising research into the physiological correlates of mental events. Its method of research was pre-eminently laboratory-based and its overall orientation was antipathetic to the legacy of Friedrich Schelling and the Romantic form of science known as *Naturphilosophie*. Its leading exponent was the German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) who founded the first psychological laboratory in 1879. However, its critics declared it to be ‘a psychology without a soul,’ Wolfram, *The Stepchildren of Science*, pp.38-39.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 71, p. 84.

Automatic writing, initially the stuff of the séance, also became early on central to the psychological experiment. The medium was the first and perhaps best experimental subject for the early interests of subliminal psychology such as that of F. W. H. Myers. The Freudian eclipse of these early studies succeeded in sweeping mediumship under the umbrella of sexuality. Clearly the séance was a space in which sexually transgressive desires could be enacted, but the collapse of the medium into the hysteric, and the apparent historical disappearance of them both, does a disservice to the complicated dynamics of mediumship.³⁴⁶

The existence of multiple points of contact between psychoanalysis, psychical research and psychology was a conspicuous feature throughout this period, when the nascent boundary demarcations separating these disciplines was especially permeable. In his 1899 masterpiece *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud made a number of laudatory remarks concerning the ‘transcendental psychologist,’ Carl du Prel.³⁴⁷ In du Prel’s estimation, it is the ‘transcendental subject’ who constitutes the metaphysical source of personhood, with the everyday phenomenological self merely acting as the holographic facsimile of this deeper source of subjectivity. Consequently, we might surmise from this a complex interplay of parallels between du Prel’s ‘transcendental subject’ and Myers’ ‘subliminal self’ vis-à-vis the drive-haunted Freudian unconscious.³⁴⁸ In contrast to the comparative lack of interest shown in Freud’s ‘dream book’ by the medical doctors and scientists of his day (due, in part, to the negative associations his early work had already acquired amongst his Viennese peers as a

³⁴⁶ Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking*, p. 107.

³⁴⁷ In a footnote to the 1914 edition (out of a total of six that were devoted to du Prel) he was described by Freud as a ‘brilliant mystic’ who had recognised that ‘the gateway to metaphysics, so far as men are concerned, lies not in waking life but in the dream,’ cited in Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, p. 48. For more on Freud’s usage of du Prel’s ideas (and on du Prel’s mystical proclivities), see Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment*, pp. 179-180 and pp. 189-191.

³⁴⁸ See Andreas Sommer, ‘From Astronomy to Transcendental Darwinism: Carl du Prel (1839-1899),’ *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 23:1 (2009), pp. 59-68.

consequence of his interest in hypnotism), Freud's most sympathetically-inclined early readers were initially to be found amongst the German psychical researchers.³⁴⁹ Moreover, the 'transitional' role played by psychoanalysis as a *de facto* nexus between occultism and the wider modernist movement can be illustrated via the work undertaken by a leading spiritualist press owned by Oswald Mutze (founded in Leipzig in 1872), which published a diverse range of texts on spiritualism, psychical research and psychology, including works by Carl du Prel, Jung's 1902 doctoral dissertation on the occult, and Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (1903).³⁵⁰ In general, whilst methodological divergences remained prominent, there nonetheless existed an occluded contiguity of thematic concerns conjoining the rise of psychoanalysis with that of fin de siècle occultism.

By 1912 Freud had become a 'corresponding member' of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London (his work on hysteria having previously been brought to the attention of the British public by the SPR in 1893), and he was subsequently to acquire honorary memberships with the American and Greek Societies for Psychical Research.³⁵¹ However, his initial decision to diverge from Breuer's theory of hypnoid states, compounded by his

³⁴⁹ Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, p. 48, pp. 71-72. See also Lydia Marinelli & Andreas Mayer, *Dreaming by the Book: Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams and the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (New York: Other Press, 2003) for a detailed account of the early reception of Freud's 'Dream Book' by his first readers. On the gradual inclusion of material on telepathy in the 1925 edition (subsequently to be excised from the 1930 edition following an intervention by Ernst Jones), see Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, 'How Freud wrote and revised his *Interpretation of Dreams*: Conflicts around the subjective origins of the book of the century,' in: Daniel Pick & Lyndal Roper (eds.), *Dreams and History: The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 30.

³⁵⁰ Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, pp. 71-72. It has been remarked how, in a secular age, a common reaction to the supernatural may entail the supplanting of 'sacred terror with psychological pathology' (Tobin Siebers). Viewed from this perspective, a reading of Schreber's memoir as an account of a 'modern Western psychotic ... overwhelmed by Hermetic visions of the macrocosm,' becomes entirely plausible—see Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets*, pp. 126-129 and Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (New York: NYRB, 2000 [1903]). See also Obeyesekere, *The Awakened Ones*, pp. 62-74. Approaching Schreber's memoir from an anthropological perspective, Obeyesekere emphasises the contextual basis upon which value-judgements such as 'visionary' or 'psychotic' are applied in order to maintain the normative ontological assumptions of the respective host-cultures.

³⁵¹ Jones, *Freud*, p. 425. See also Robert D. Hinshelwood, 'Psychoanalysis in Britain: Points of Cultural Access,' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 76 (1995).

comparative neglect of dissociative states, meant that Freud had effectively set himself in opposition to a body of then influential theories that drew upon an ‘alternate consciousness’ paradigm associated with the work of figures such as Richet, Myers and James, each of whom explicitly sought to synergise relations between academic psychology and psychical research.³⁵²

We have already noted a marked proclivity on Freud’s part to experience occult phenomena as a potential source of both fear *and* fascination. In this respect, Freud’s forgetfulness in the context of his 1921 communication with Hereward Harrington constitutes an exemplary instance of the conflicts that can be experienced by those who find themselves in contact with the ‘paranormal’.³⁵³ Since it is in Freud’s papers on telepathy that we find his most sustained expression of these tensions, it is to these papers that we shall now turn. It is outside my remit to provide an exhaustive account of Freud’s views on the phenomenon of telepathy and its place in psychoanalytic theory.³⁵⁴ For my present purposes, it will be sufficient to outline the origins of the telepathy concept, before embarking on a highly compressed examination of Freud’s complex and (at times) difficult to determine views on this subject.

The term *telepathy* was coined in December 1882 in the first volume of the *Proceedings for the Society for Psychical Research*: ‘we venture to introduce the words *Telaesthesia* and

³⁵² See Luckhurst, “‘Something tremendous, something elemental,’ p. 58; on Freud’s divergence from the alternate conscious tradition, see Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp.351-360.

³⁵³ This term derives from ‘parapsychology,’ originally coined by Max Dessoir in 1889 to denote the science of phenomena that ‘go beyond the everyday [but nonetheless] come out of the normal life of the psyche’: in Treitel, *A Science for the Soul*, p. 46. It was around this same time (1885) that F. W. H. Myers coined the term ‘supernormal’ to demarcate anomalous phenomena that could at least potentially be made subject to a scientific explanation from those accounts that sought to evoke an explicitly ‘supernatural’ provenance—see Pilard, ‘C. G. Jung & Intuition,’ p. 66 and Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible* p. 66. See also Sommer, ‘Are you afraid of the dark?’ for a lucid discussion as to why both the ‘will to believe’ and the ‘will to disbelieve’ in the existence of paranormal phenomena can prove equally problematic for the researcher.

³⁵⁴ See George Devereux (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and the Occult* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974).

Telepathy to cover all cases of impressions received at a distance'.³⁵⁵ The term itself drew upon a diverse amalgam of meanings, ranging from the then cutting-edge technologies of the telegraphy and the telegram to the feeling-toned resonances of the ancient Greek *pathos*.³⁵⁶ It arose at a time and in a culture where advances in communicative technologies coupled with evolving ideas about the nature of the mind (and of the 'supernatural') were closely aligned to changing notions about the respective natures of intimacy and communication.³⁵⁷ For Myers, the concept of telepathy constituted the vital conceptual matrix that bound together a wide array of disparate phenomena, ranging from poetic and philosophical genius, through to 'spirit communication' and 'crisis apparitions' incorporated into a metaphysical world-view which, whilst methodologically aligned to science, nonetheless drew upon the earlier discourses of mesmerism and animal magnetism, and ultimately from ancient Platonic notions of a 'world-soul'. Yet, despite its implicit reliance upon earlier modes of 'esoteric' discourse, it nonetheless sought to supersede these by substituting in their place a category of human psychical potential that was theoretically accessible to everyone.³⁵⁸ It was (in parallel with the Freudian concept of the 'transference') closely aligned with the experience of the erotic: 'Love is a kind of exalted, but unspecialised telepathy' (Myers, *Human Personality*, 1903).³⁵⁹ It was the mesmeric phenomenon of the *rapport* that constituted the conceptual matrix for telepathy and for the transference, both of which can thereby be traced to a common ancestral origin.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy 1870-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 60.

³⁵⁶ Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible*, p. 81.

³⁵⁷ Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking*, p. 14.

³⁵⁸ Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible*, p. 81. For an excellent overview of Myers' theory of the *subliminal self*, see Raia, *The New Prometheans*, pp. 141-204.

³⁵⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁶⁰ Kuhn, *Psychoanalysis in Britain, 1893-1913*, pp. 54-55. As far back as 1818 a Parisian doctor called Jean Jacques Virey observed the following: 'Magnetism is nothing more than the result of natural, nervous emotions produced by imagination and affection between different individuals and principally by those which arise from sexual relations,' cited in: Raymond De Saussure, 'Transference and Animal Magnetism,' *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 12 (1943), p. 199. It was roughly during this same period that Joseph Philippe Deleuze (1753-1835) observed how both the magnetizer and his subject could experience sexual feelings as a consequence of the effects arising from the *rapport*—see Adam Crabtree, 'The Transition to Secular

Marked parallels have been drawn between Freud's description of 'telepathy' (*Gedankenübertragung*) and the concepts of 'transference' (*Übertragung*)/ 'countertransference' (*Gegenübertragung*), leading one commentator to describe the former as "an extreme, rebellious form of transference" (Lana Lin).³⁶¹ Indeed, these terms seemed almost, at times, to converge upon each other, as though driven by a kind of doubling involutive process, possessive of a discrete hauntological resonance:

One may say that the central psychoanalytic concept of 'transference' would be inconceivable without the prior theorization of telepathy. Transference, like the dead, operates as a haunting return: the 'stereotype plates' of first love turn everyone who comes after as ghostly: 'All my friends have in a certain sense been reincarnations of this first figure ... they have been *revenants*'. It was the analytic interaction in which transference and telepathy repeatedly touched on each other.³⁶²

The phenomenon of transference evolved out of a cultural matrix in which mesmerism, hypnotic suggestion and telepathic transfer feature as constitutive elements integral to the nascent conceptualization of the therapeutic rapport.³⁶³ Freud conducted his own experiments into telepathy with his colleague Sándor Ferenczi and his daughter Anna, the success of which came to have a 'persuasive power' sufficient to relegate 'diplomatic considerations ...

Psychotherapy,' in Edwin R. Wallace & John Gash (eds.) *History of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology* (New York: Springer, 2008) p. 563.

³⁶¹ See Hanna Zeavin, 'Freud's Séance,' *American Imago*, 75, 1 (2018), p. 57.

³⁶² Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy*, p. 275. The citations from Freud referenced in this extract are taken from 'The Dynamics of Transference' (1912) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899).

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 276. There is evidence to suggest that as early as 1888 Freud was aware of the associations between the phenomenon of 'trance' and that of 'telepathy' via the then-famous experiment of Babinski with Charcot—see Mark Solms, 'A Previously-Untranslated review by Freud of a Monograph on Hypnotism,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 70 (1989), pp. 401-403. See also Raia, *The New Prometheans*, pp. 179-186.

to ... a back seat,' much to Ernest Jones' chagrin.³⁶⁴ Freud also participated in at least two telepathic séances over a brief period in 1913.³⁶⁵ Freud was notably impressed by Gilbert Murray's account of a series of telepathic experiments published in the *Proceedings of the SPR* in December 1924. He subsequently disseminated his views on these experiments in the form of a circular letter, which he distributed to the membership of the Secret Committee on the nineteenth of February 1925 in terms that were sufficiently laudatory for him to assert that he 'would even be prepared to lend support to the cause of telepathy through psychoanalysis'.³⁶⁶

Freud himself was highly conscious of both the negative implications that recurrent accusations of 'occultism' could potentially have for psychoanalysis, whilst remaining sympathetic to their respective synergistic potential. Both disciplines were frequently perceived as having disreputable origins, and both shared an aspiration towards establishing their scientific credentials.³⁶⁷ Regarding their potential for synergy, Freud was of the opinion that dream-analysis could be of particular value for research on telepathy, insofar as it provided the tools and concepts for unearthing latent telepathic communications from the distracting babel of the manifest dream content. Freud also speculated that the dream-state could potentially be conducive for the reception of telepathic communications.³⁶⁸ Freud was

³⁶⁴ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (London: Papermac, 1989), p. 445.

³⁶⁵ Roazen, *Freud and his Followers*, p. 237; Zeavin, *Freud's Séance*, pp. 57-58. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we find that 'All records of the day that the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society spent with the mediums are missing,' (ibid., p. 58).

³⁶⁶ Renaud Evrard, Claudie Massicotte & Thomas Rabeyron, 'Freud as Psychical researcher: The Impossible Freudian Legacy,' *Imágó Budapest*, 6, 4 (2017), p. 13. It is worthwhile remarking that a number of Murray's contemporaries observed a series of methodological flaws in his work that were subsequently acknowledged by the author. However, these limitations may not have been of so much interest to Freud comparative to the opportunities provided by his excursions into telepathy as a means for furthering his psychoanalytic theorising.

³⁶⁷ Jones, *Sigmund Freud*; Phillips, *Terrors and Experts*.

³⁶⁸ Freud (1922), in Devereux (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and the Occult*. This volume consists of a series of very useful primary sources addressing the topic of psychoanalysis and telepathy covering the period from 1899-1953. While the editor of this volume has included a total of six texts by Freud consisting of a combination of individual papers and book excerpts, more recent commentators, such as Evrard et al. (2017) and Reichbart (2019) have tended to focus upon the following four key texts: 'Psychoanalysis and Telepathy' SE 18 (1921),

notably wary of the idea of precognition and went to considerable—not to say ingenuous—lengths in his deployment of psychoanalytic hermeneutics to ensure that it remained discounted as a theoretical possibility.³⁶⁹ However, Freud also believed that the psychoanalytic concept of the transference potentially offered a new approach to the study of telepathic and associated parapsychological phenomena.³⁷⁰ Indeed, it is possible to see their linguistic and clinical contiguity as playing a contributory role in subsequent attempts to theorise the transgenerational transmission of trauma and the unconscious circulation of affect. It is these aspects of their entwined interaction that have led some commentators to identify Freud's work on telepathy as being foundational to psychoanalysis and as integral to its metapsychology.³⁷¹

Freud provided his own pithy definition of telepathy as '... the reception of a mental process by one person from another by means other than sensory perception,' before going on to argue that 'it provides the kernel of truth in many other hypotheses that would otherwise be incredible'.³⁷² Freud subsequently speculated (1933) that such phenomena constituted the original archaic method of communication between individuals that, during the course of phylogenetic evolution, was replaced by sensory communication. However, he also proposed that this older method of communication could still persist in the background and might

pp. 177-193; 'Dreams and Telepathy,' SE 18 (1922), pp. 197-220; 'The Occult Significance of Dreams,' SE 19 (1925), pp. 125-138; 'Dreams and the Occult,' SE 22 (1933), pp. 31-56. Notably, Freud makes reference in three of these papers (1921; 1925; 1933) to a single patient called Frau Hirschfeld, who evoked in him 'those two unsettling and intertwined phenomena that always made him uneasy: countertransference and thought-transference,' Ernst Falzeder, *Psychoanalytic Filiations: Mapping the Psychoanalytic Movement* (London: Karnac, 2015), p. 45.

³⁶⁹ Freud's misgivings on the topic of precognition were not shared by all of his psychoanalytic successors—see, for example, Jules Eisenbud, *Paranormal Foreknowledge: Problems and Perplexities* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1982).

³⁷⁰ Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, p. 534.

³⁷¹ See Hewitt, *Freud on Religion*, pp. 86-89 and Stephen Frosh, *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 5-6 for more on this theme.

³⁷² Freud, 'Dreams and Telepathy' (1922), in Devereux (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and the Occult*, p. 88.

potentially, under certain conditions, become active again.³⁷³ Moreover, by locating his speculations on the origins of telepathy within an atavistic and bio-mechanistic frame of reference, Freud distinguishes his approach to this phenomenon from that of Myers, who construed its origins and activities as existing within a more expansive world-view.³⁷⁴

Freud could be intriguingly (and at times disingenuously) equivocal in his attitude towards telepathy, concluding one paper in which the topic is discussed at some length with the following nugatory remark: 'I have no opinion; I know nothing about it'.³⁷⁵ Yet despite these disclaimers, he initially felt sufficiently constrained to treat the topic of telepathy as a 'psychoanalytic secret' to be shared only with his most select and trusted colleagues. Freud's fluctuating attitude towards telepathy charted a complex path over the course of nearly a quarter of a century, oscillating between an enthusiastic advocacy in support of the views propounded by its most vocal supporters, Jung and Ferenczi; the persistent antipathy displayed by senior analysts such as Abraham and Jones towards the disputed phenomenon; and the middle ground in this debate, which was inhabited by figures such as Eitingon, Rank and Sachs.³⁷⁶ In the course of these discussions, associated concepts such as 'empathy,' became the subject of heated debate, due in part to what Freud described in his correspondence with Ferenczi as its 'mystical character,' and the absence of satisfactory criteria to distinguish its unique characteristics from those of telepathy.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ Ibid; Freud, 'Dreams and Occultism' (1933), p. 108.

³⁷⁴ Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking*, pp. 124-125; Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible*, pp. 66-75.

³⁷⁵ Freud, 'Dreams and Telepathy' (1922), in Devereux (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and the Occult*, p. 86.

³⁷⁶ Roazen, *Freud and his Followers*.

³⁷⁷ Sudhir Kakar, 'Psychoanalysis and Eastern Healing Traditions,' *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 48 (2003), pp. 667-669.

While Freud's equivocations on this subject are suggestive of a sensitivity to political nuances coupled with a strong undertow of psychological conflict, he nonetheless evidenced in his writings on the topic a highly sophisticated understanding of the 'psychopathology' of paranormal phenomena (vestiges of infantile omnipotence, hallucination, subliminal perception, fraud etc.) alongside a judicious and nuanced appreciation of the evidence that might be adduced in its favour. Nevertheless, despite his dealings with the Society of Psychical Research, his knowledge of the associated literature, his experiments with telepathy, and his participation in telepathic séances, Freud nonetheless remained keen to promote an idea of psychoanalysis that made it seem more akin to a medical procedure than to a séance.³⁷⁸ The deployment of such a strategy evidently made good sense in the context of a political climate in which Freud and his disciples found it necessary to clearly demarcate their nascent discipline from its 'occult' rivals and competitors.³⁷⁹ Yet despite these politic equivocations, it is evident that the trajectory Freud followed from 'Dreams and Telepathy' (1922) through to 'Dreams and Occultism' (1933) is one marked by an increasing sense of conviction concerning the reality of the phenomenon under investigation.

Notably, a number of more recent commentators have speculated that Freud himself may have displayed signs of a 'repressed' telepathic sensitivity that was experienced by him during the course of his own clinical practice.³⁸⁰ In the Forsyth case, for example (in 'Dreams and Occultism' [1933]), it has been argued that the telepathic phenomena purportedly manifested by Freud's patient, Herr P., could have originated from within Freud himself.³⁸¹ It

³⁷⁸ See Philips, *Terrors and Experts*, p. 19.

³⁷⁹ Gyimesi, 'The problem of Demarcation'.

³⁸⁰ See, for example, Eric Wargo, *Time Loops: Precognition, Retrocausation, and the Unconscious* (San Antonio: Anomalist Books, 2018). Since this hypothesis is based on the psychological significance that such ostensibly anomalous processes may have had for Freud, its validity is therefore not dependent upon such arguments as might be adduced either to support or refute the existence of such phenomena.

³⁸¹ Reichbart, *The Paranormal Surrounds Us*, pp. 109-111.

has even been conjectured that Freud's 'Irma' dream, the founding 'specimen' dream of psychoanalysis subsequently immortalised by him in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, may have been 'precognitive' in terms of its foretelling the type of cancer Freud would eventually die from in 1939.³⁸² Freud's adoption of a *de facto* dual aspect monist theory of mind, entailing an ontologically ambiguous unconscious, was theoretically capable of incorporating the possibility of telepathic phenomena originating from an as yet unidentified archaic phylogenetic process.³⁸³ However, the uncanny possibilities evoked by the precognitive hypothesis brought in its wake the spectre of a non-materialist world-view sufficiently disconcerting as to require the invocation of apotropaic 'stop-concepts' (Bertrand Méheust) in order to prevent the emergence of an acute 'metaphysical emergency'.³⁸⁴ A poignant and enigmatic gloss to these speculations can be found in the text of Lou Andreas Salome's *Freud Journal*, where she writes as follows:

The day after the congress, September 9 [1913], with Freud in the Hofgarten. The long conversation (in confidence) on these rare occasions of thought-transference which certainly torment him. This is a point which he hopes need never again be touched in his lifetime; I hope the contrary. In a recent case the situation goes like this ... the mother had indeed abreacted that which had retained its intensity in the daughter, quite as though it were her own, far beyond her own experience.³⁸⁵

³⁸² Wargo, *Time Loops*, pp. 222-230; Salomon Resnik, *The Theatre of the Dream* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 119-120. For a haunting fictional evocation of this theme as applied to an imaginary case of Freud's, see *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas.

³⁸³ See Mark Solms & Oliver H. Turnbull, 'What is Neuropsychanalysis?' *Neuropsychanalysis*, 13, 2 (2011), pp. 4-6. On the association between dual aspect monism and paranormal phenomena, see Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Flip: epiphanies of mind and the future of knowledge* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2019).

³⁸⁴ Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible*, p. 222.

³⁸⁵ Lou Andreas-Salome, *The Freud Journal* (London: Quartet Books, 1987), pp. 169-170.

As matters so transpired, Freud's hopes in this regard were to be largely unfulfilled as, over time, this *primal scene* instantiated a trans-generationally *encrypted* trauma possessing its own spectrally transmissible qualities. In this respect, Derrida was correct to assert that psychoanalysis was 'set on swallowing *and* simultaneously rejecting the foreign body named Telepathy, for assimilating it and vomiting it without being able to make up its mind to do one or the other'.³⁸⁶ As a consequence, the metapsychological 'carapace' that classical psychoanalytic theory erected in response to this unconsciously perceived threat of an ontological *Outside* gradually began to take on the aspect of a psychoanalytic metapsychology 'haunted' by the revenants and survivals signified by its own telepathic 'ghost'.³⁸⁷

3.5. 'This is gold'—Freud and Kabbalistic hermeneutics

... a real understanding of the Jewish component in Freud's outlook ... would carry us beyond Jewish orthodoxy into the subterranean workings of Hasidism, and then into the intricacies of the Kabbalah, which still remains unexplored psychologically.³⁸⁸

The links between psychoanalysis and the Jewish Kabbalah have been described as 'profound,' with psychoanalysis itself being construed 'a secular extension of Kabbalah'.³⁸⁹ Even so, no less a figure than the great scholar of Kabbalism Gershom Scholem (1897-1982)

³⁸⁶ Jacques Derrida, 'Telepathy,' trans. Nicolas Royle, *Oxford Literary Review* 10 (1988), p. 38.

³⁸⁷ See also Jung's remarks on the role of psychoanalytic theory as a defensive formation cited in Peter Kingsley, *Catafalque: Carl Jung and the end of humanity vol. 2* (London: Catafalque Press, 2018), p. 508 n. 74.

³⁸⁸ C.G. Jung, 'Letter to Edith Schröder' (April 1957), in: *C.G. Jung Letters* 2 vols., [ed. Gerhard Adler, trans. R.F.C. Hull] (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 1: 358-359.

³⁸⁹ Joseph H. Berke, *The Hidden Freud: his Hassidic roots* (London: Karnac, 2015), p. xi.

was dismissive of Freud and psychoanalysis, opining that he had ‘read dozens of better mythological concepts of the soul than his’. As an historian, Scholem was similarly critical of the ahistorical and essentialist propensities of C. G. Jung and his followers.³⁹⁰ Yet, in spite of the arguments that might be adduced against undertaking such a comparison, a strong case has nonetheless been made for construing the conceptual metaphors provided by psychoanalysis and analytical psychology as providing two of the best contemporary frameworks that we have for engaging with the concepts of the theosophical Kabbalah.³⁹¹ However, such endeavours are not without their associated risks. As Sanford Drob has astutely observed:

‘By “projecting” the kabbalist’s myths into the realm of reason and philosophy, two things occur. The first is that the principles of logic and reason begin to deconstruct in the face of the antinimous nature of the Kabbalistic symbols. The second is that there is a moment where we are able to understand the myths for the first time in a perspicacious fashion, before the vehicle of this understanding (reason) itself begins to fall apart before our eyes ... the very rational concepts, elements, and structures that we use in order to make the Kabbalistic symbols comprehensible begin to lose their own normal sense in the process of being applied to the Kabbalah.’³⁹²

Definitional and methodological difficulties notwithstanding, the present section of this chapter attempts to undertake the admittedly impossible task of providing a brief and highly

³⁹⁰ Joseph Dan, ‘Foreword,’ In: Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962/1991), pp. 6-7.

³⁹¹ Sanford L. Drob, *Symbols of the Kabbalah* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 2000), p. 47. For arguments in support of viewing psychoanalysis and analytical psychology as essentially convergent disciplines, see Mario Jacoby, ‘The Growing Convergence of Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analysis,’ *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 10 (2000), pp. 489-503 and Robin S. Brown (ed.) *Re-encountering Jung: Analytical Psychology and Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

³⁹² Drob, *Symbols of the Kabbalah*, pp. 35-37.

selective overview of the Kabbalah insofar as this might be deemed pertinent for the purposes of this thesis.³⁹³

The Kabbalah reflects five elements within Jewish Tradition: *Aggadah*, the narrative traditions of the Talmud and Midrash; *halacha*, Jewish law; liturgy, including poetry and prayer; *Merkavah*, or ‘chariot’ mysticism, which predated the Kabbalah, and was based upon the prophetic visions of Ezekiel; and the *Sefer Yetzirah*, a proto-Kabbalistic work that introduced the doctrines of the *sefirot*, the attributes of God, and the mystical contemplation of numbers and letters.³⁹⁴ Scholem regarded both the *Merkavah* and *Hekhaloth* (‘throne’) literature as constituting a Jewish type of Gnosticism that had parallels with (but was not identical to) the other variants of Gnosticism that existed in the Middle and Near East in the second century A.D. For my current purposes, it will be sufficient to focus upon the *Lurianic* Kabbalah, since there are reasons to suppose it is this particular version of the Kabbalah that has provided a ‘basic metaphor’ for elucidating Kabbalistic thought within a contemporary comparative context.³⁹⁵

³⁹³ I am indebted to the following sources: Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946/1995); Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978). However, while these texts possess a deservedly classic status, I should state that the perspective taken here is primarily indebted to the writings of Sanford L. Drob due, in large part, to the subtlety of his comparative readings across the disciplines of Kabbalah, philosophy and psychology.

³⁹⁴ See Karen E. Starr, *Repair of the Soul: Metaphors of Transformation in Jewish Mysticism and Psychoanalysis* (Abington: Routledge, 2008), pp. 4-5.

³⁹⁵ For a discussion on Lurianic Kabbalah as constituting a ‘basic metaphor,’ see Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors*, pp. xviii-xxi. For examples of Lurianic Kabbalah deployed in post-Freudian psychoanalysis, see Eigen, *Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis*; Joseph H. Berke & Stanley Schneider, *Centers of Power: the Convergence of Psychoanalysis and Kabbalah* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 2008); Joseph H. Berke & Stanley Schneider, ‘Repairing Worlds: An Exploration of the Psychoanalytical and Kabbalistic Concepts of Reparation and *Tikkun*,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 90 (2003), pp. 723-749; Harriet Kutzky, ‘Reparation and Tikkun: A Comparison of the Kleinian and Kabbalistic Concepts,’ *The International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 16 (1989), pp. 449-458. It is important to note that Jung was apparently unaware of Luria’s ideas prior to 1954 and viewed his belated encounter with them as constituting confirmation of his own ideas. See Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors*, p. 336.

It was in the sixteenth century in the town of Safed in Israel that Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria developed a strikingly original theosophical system based upon ideas originally articulated in the *Zohar*. Luria's oral teachings were written down by his disciple Chaim Vital (1543-1620) and can be briefly summarised as follows.

According to the Lurianic Kabbalah, God consists of a paradoxical conjunction of *Ein-sof* (being without end) and *ayin* ('nothingness') in which creation was made possible through an act of withdrawal known as *tzimtzum*, which created a void from which the *sefirot* emanated. However, the vessels that were meant to contain these emanations shattered (*Shevirat Hakelim*), entrapping shards of light in 'husks' known as *klippot* that form the lower worlds, including the world of evil, referred to by Luria as the *sitra achra*. In the higher worlds, the masculine and feminine aspects were driven apart by this shattering of the vessels, resulting in a disruption of the flow of erotic energy throughout all the worlds. Nevertheless, some of the divine light that was not trapped in *klippot* returned to its source, thereby beginning a process of repair known as *tikkun*. Humanity's role in this cosmic drama is to support this process of *tikkun*.³⁹⁶

The potential relevance of the Lurianic Kabbalah to psychoanalysis has been lucidly summarised in the following terms:

³⁹⁶ See Starr, *Repair of the Soul*, p. 6. See also the very helpful tabulations of the Lurianic system in Drob, *Symbols of the Kabbalah*, pp. 18-19 and Stanford L. Drob, *Kabbalistic Visions: C.G. Jung and Jewish Mysticism* (New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2010), pp. 17-18. The intricacies of the Lurianic system, considered in its entirety, are such as to lead to its being described by both Scholem and Idel as one of the most complex intellectual systems ever produced by the human mind (Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors*, p. xviii). For an in-depth contemporary philosophical and psychological interpretation of the Lurianic Kabbalah, see Drob, *Symbols of the Kabbalah*.

One more schema of spiritual transformation is the Tree of Life, in the Kabbalistic tradition of Jewish spirituality. This is a remarkable diagram which sets out ten sepiroth, or centres of energy, to describe different elements in the nature of man. It is of potentially special interest to psychoanalysts, because more than any other spiritual tradition that I know of, this offers a clearly worked out, indeed a highly elaborated, account of psychic structure. To compare psychoanalytic conceptualisations of psychic change with the dynamics of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life would be a fascinating enterprise. By studying the multifaceted meanings of each centre, and their relation to each other within the structure of the Tree of Life, the student of Kabbalah is led to a deepening understanding of what it means to be human.³⁹⁷

While various studies have been made concerning the Jewish contexts to Freudian Psychoanalysis, comparatively few of these have specifically addressed the topic of Jewish mysticism in any detail.³⁹⁸ David Bakan's *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* was the first serious attempt to establish a connection between Freud's familial background and his purported use of Kabbalistic ideas in the formulation of his theories.³⁹⁹ Unfortunately, the general critical consensus was that this attempt was largely unconvincing.⁴⁰⁰ Bakan did successfully demonstrate that Freud self-identified as a Jew in an increasingly anti-Semitic milieu, and managed to propose a convincing argument to support his thesis that this increasing atmosphere of hostility contributed to Freud's strategic denial of any Jewish origin

³⁹⁷ Michael Parsons, 'Ways of Transformation,' in: David M. Black (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century: Competitors or Collaborators?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 124-125.

³⁹⁸ See, for example, Stephen Frosh, 'Psychoanalysis and Judaism,' in: David M. Black (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and Religion in the 21st Century: Competitors or Collaborators?* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 205-222.

³⁹⁹ David Bakan, (2nd edition) *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958/2004).

⁴⁰⁰ For criticisms of Bakan's theses, see Drob, *Kabbalistic Visions*, pp. 18-19 and Stanford L. Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors: Jewish Mystical Themes in Ancient and Modern Thought* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 2000b), pp. 242-243. See also Starr, *Repair of the Soul*, p. 17.

to psychoanalysis. Bakan also made a strong case for linking psychoanalytic interpretation to the Talmudic exegesis of the Torah.⁴⁰¹ However, his thesis that Freud identified with the militant messianism of Shabbatai Tzvi (1626-1676) has generally been viewed as being speculative to the point of being untenable.

While Bakan subsequently acknowledged his failure to properly evidence his assertions that the Freudian theory of dreams and the theory of sexuality had their antecedents in the Jewish mystical traditions, his subsequent attempts to redress this deficit in the form of a co-authored study on Maimonides, although scrupulously researched, is hampered by the difficulties encountered in seeking to establish an unambiguous association between Freud and the intellectualist mysticism of Maimonides.⁴⁰² More convincing in this regard is Karen Starr's review of the biographical data, in which she concludes that it is unlikely Freud consciously incorporated Jewish mystical ideas into his writings. However, Starr does accept that Freud was almost certainly exposed to Kabbalistic ideas via his familial and cultural milieu, and that he was therefore correspondingly influenced by these sources, albeit at an unconscious level of awareness.⁴⁰³

The above criticisms notwithstanding, Bakan did describe in the preface to the second edition of *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* an intriguing encounter between Freud and Chaim Bloch, in which the former, having been requested by Bloch to write a foreword to a work on the Lurianic Kabbalist Chaim Vital, reportedly exclaimed on reading the

⁴⁰¹ See also Ken Frieden, *Freud's Dream of Interpretation* (Albany: SUNY, 1990) for an intriguing account of the role played by Talmudic hermeneutics in the formation of Freudian dream interpretation.

⁴⁰² David Bakan et al, *Maimonides' Cure of Souls: Medieval Precursor of Psychoanalysis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).

⁴⁰³ Starr, *Repair of the Soul*, p. 18. See also Tom Keve, *Triad: the physicists, the analysts, the kabbalists* (London: Rosenberger & Krausz, 2000) for a fascinating, impeccably researched work of fiction that addresses this topic.

manuscript that—‘This is gold,’ and queried why Vital’s work had never been brought to his attention before.⁴⁰⁴ Unfortunately, a disagreement that ensued between both parties shortly thereafter as to the relative merits of publishing Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* in a climate of anti-Semitism resulted in the proposed foreword never being written. Nevertheless, it is notable that when Bloch perused Freud’s library during the course of his visit, he reportedly found a copy of a French translation of the *Zohar*, as well as a number of German books on the Kabbalah.⁴⁰⁵

It is worth remarking on the fact that Freud, in spite of his adherence to a scientific *Weltanschauung*, was in fact highly superstitious.⁴⁰⁶ These superstitions included a conviction of the significance and predictive powers of numbers that may not have been all that different (at least in some of its aspects) from the Kabbalistic number mysticism of *Gematria*, as well as a belief (to the point sometimes of dread) in such notions as the *Doppelgänger*, which may have had its counterpart in the Kabbalistic concept of the *Tzelem* (or celestial twin).⁴⁰⁷ It has been proposed that these beliefs might have constituted a form of ‘the return of the repressed’ that functioned as a counterpoint to Freud’s avowed naturalism, and which may even have contributed a dynamic impetus to his work.⁴⁰⁸ Be that as it may, while Freud frankly acknowledged on his part the existence of strong political motives for

⁴⁰⁴ Bakan, *Sigmund Freud*, pp. xvi-xviii.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. Bakan’s text also refers to a large collection of *Judaica* in Freud’s library that was apparently absent from the presumptive ‘Freud library’ housed at that time in the library of the New York Psychiatric Institute. Unfortunately, searches made on the CD-Rom catalogue of Freud’s library (Davies & Fichtner, 2006) using the search terms ‘Kabbalah’ and ‘Zohar’ came back with no results. Consequently, for the time being at least, the implications of Bakan’s anecdote would appear to remain as no more than a tantalising and intriguing possibility.

⁴⁰⁶ See chapter XIV (‘Occultism’) in Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Vol. 3*, pp. 402-436 for extensive evidence in support of this assertion.

⁴⁰⁷ See Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors*, p. 247.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

keeping psychoanalysis separate from the occult, he also continued to aver in private that the occult was in fact inextricably bound to psychoanalysis.⁴⁰⁹

While Freud does not appear to have made any explicit references to the Lurianic Kabbalah in his written works, there is nonetheless some evidence in his correspondence with Karl Abraham of an explicit (and sympathetic) awareness on the part of both correspondents as to the parallels that might be adduced to exist between psychoanalytic and Talmudic modes of interpretation.⁴¹⁰ On the 11th May 1908 Abraham wrote to Freud as follows:

I freely admit that I find it easier than Jung does to go along with you. I, too, have always felt this intellectual kinship. After all, the Talmudic ways of thinking cannot disappear in us just like that. Some days ago a small paragraph in *Jokes* strangely attracted me. When I looked at it more closely, I found that, in the technique of apposition and in its whole structure, it was completely Talmudic.⁴¹¹

Moreover, in his later correspondence Jung arrived at the view that a full understanding of Freud ‘... would carry us beyond Jewish orthodoxy into the subterranean workings of Hassidism and then into the intricacies of the Kabbalah, which still remains unexplored psychologically’.⁴¹² Consequently, the intriguing parallels that Drob adduces between the

⁴⁰⁹ Mikita Brottman, *Phantoms of the Clinic: From Thought-Transference to Projective Identification* (London: Karnac, 2011), p. 6.

⁴¹⁰ Richard Kradin, *The Parting of the Ways: how esoteric Judaism and Christianity influenced the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), p. 12.

⁴¹¹ Abraham to Freud, 11th May 1908, letter 30A, in: Ernst Falzeder (ed.), *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham 1907-1925* (London: Karnac, 2002), p. 40. Notably, Freud wrote to Jung in 1909 concerning his superstitious feelings regarding numbers as follows: ‘You will see in this another confirmation of the specifically Jewish nature of my mysticism,’ see William McGuire (ed.), *Freud/Jung Letters* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 146 [139F 16th April 1909].

⁴¹² Cited in Drob, *Kabbalistic Metaphors*, p. 249.

Lurianic Kabbalah and Freudian Psychoanalysis are not quite as tendentious as they might initially appear to be.⁴¹³

Shifting our attention momentarily to the work of an influential early twentieth-century occultist, it is worth remarking that the esotericist, Kabbalist and ‘psychoanalyst’ Dion Fortune (1890-1946) had great respect for Freudian theory, to the extent that she recommended Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* to her esoteric students as ‘occultism on a sound scientific basis’.⁴¹⁴ Through her deployment of Freudian psychoanalysis (she published a book on the topic under her birth name of Violet Firth entitled *The Machinery of the Mind* that was unfavourably reviewed in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*), it has been proposed that Fortune was in fact appropriating to her own brand of occultism a psychological school of thought that was itself already imbued with esoteric elements from Freud’s Hasidic background as well as the Kabbalistic currents (both Lurianic and ecstatic) that were already imbricated within the tenets of this movement:

In Fortune’s work, a curious ouroboric circle may be observed: an early-twentieth-century occultist ‘psychologises’ esoteric ideas through the use of a psychological system which is itself a ‘secularised’ expression of those same ideas, and likewise ‘sacralises’ that psychological system through the framework of the same esoteric ideas that infused it to begin with.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ Drob, *Kabbalistic Visions*, pp. 20-22. These parallels include: primary procreative energy/*Ein-sof*/the Libido; negation of energy/*Tzimtzum*/primary repression; deconstruction/*Shevirah*/splitting of ego-structures, to name but three.

⁴¹⁴ Cited in Liz Greene, *Magi and Maggidim: The Kabbalah in British Occultism 1860-1940* (Trinity Saint David Ceredigion: Sophia Centre Press, 2012), p. 393. On Fortune’s time as a student of psychoanalysis at The Medico-Psychological Clinic in Brunswick Square, see Gareth Knight, *Dion Fortune and the Inner Light* (Loughborough: Thoos Publications, 2000), pp. 29-35.

⁴¹⁵ Green, *Magi and Maggidim*, p. 396-397.

The extent to which psychoanalytic theory is suffused by Kabbalistic traces has become increasingly apparent within some of the more recent scholarly literature.⁴¹⁶ Consequently, it is perhaps not so surprising to encounter in Freud's dream interpretation a hermeneutic approach that treats dreams as though they were oneiric 'texts' taken from the Torah that needed to be decoded if the secret workings of the psyche were to be revealed:

There is a psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and ... if that procedure is employed, every dream reveals itself as a psychical structure which has a meaning ... I shall further endeavour to elucidate the process to which the strangeness and obscurity of dreams are due and to deduce from those processes the nature of the psychical forces by whose concurrent or mutually opposing action dreams are generated. (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*)

It has been remarked that if in the above passage the phrase 'psychical forces' were to be replaced by 'ten *sefirot*,' then this Freudian text could easily be read as an illustration of traditional Kabbalistic hermeneutics.⁴¹⁷ Such instances serve to exemplify the extent to which it is possible for certain elements of the Freudian *corpus* to be construed as a palimpsest, beneath whose superficially mechanistic surface the glimmers of older, pre-Enlightenment traditions of the 'preternatural' can dimly be discerned:

When Freud discovered (really, *rediscovered*) the unconscious, he blended the logical positivistic notion of absolute science and the German Romantic conception of the mysterious preternatural powers of Nature. The result was a lexicon of ontic,

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 398-399. See also Joseph H. Berke & Stanley Schneider, *Centers of Power: the Convergence of Psychoanalysis and Kabbalah* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 2008), p. 6.

⁴¹⁷ I am indebted to Greene, *Magi and Maggidim*, p. 400 for both the quotation from Freud and for the suggested parallels with Kabbalistic hermeneutics.

mechanistic, dehumanised entities such as “drive” and “object,” rather than “homunculi,” “chimerae,” “monsters,” “demons,” “angels,” “ghosts,” or “revenants.”⁴¹⁸

Having set out the Freudian context to these developments, the remaining chapters of this thesis endeavour to set out the evidence for adducing the existence of an *Orphic trajectory* active within the main body of psychoanalysis, through which a number of influential post-Freudian psychoanalysts (most notably W.R. Bion) have engaged—both tacitly and more explicitly—in the project of transforming ‘the positivistic-mechanistic drive unconscious into a numinous, mystical unconscious’.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ James Grotstein, *Who is the Dreamer who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 144.

⁴¹⁹ James Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness: Wilfred Bion’s Legacy to Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2007), p. 331.

CHAPTER FOUR: FROM METAPSYCHOLOGY TO MAGNETIC GNOSIS

4.1. Introduction: The Budapest School of psychoanalysis

It is to be expected that Budapest will now become the headquarters of our movement.⁴²⁰

Sigmund Freud to Karl Abraham (1918)

Sándor Ferenczi (1873-1933) was the single major catalyst for the reception and development of psychoanalysis within Budapest in particular and across Hungary more generally. Five years after his initial meeting with Freud, Ferenczi established the Hungarian Psychoanalytical Society on the 19th May 1913. Moreover, his tireless efforts as a speaker, writer and teacher of psychoanalytic topics facilitated the dissemination of its ideas to a wide and varied range of modernist intellectuals across Hungary. The role that Ferenczi played in the development of psychoanalysis cannot be under-estimated, even if, in the words of Lou Andreas-Salomé, it came about that—for reasons that shall become apparent—‘his was not the present but the future’.⁴²¹ Ferenczi’s influence upon his roster of analysands and students was substantial, and included figures such as Melanie Klein, Ernst Jones, Franz Alexander, Michael and Enid Balint, John Rickman, Margaret Mahler and Otto Rank, to name only a

⁴²⁰ Sigmund Freud to Karl Abraham, letter 342F dated the 27/08/1918, in: Ernst Falzeder (ed.) [trans. by Caroline Schwarzacher et al.] *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham 1907-1925* (London: Karnac, 2002), p. 382.

⁴²¹ Peter L. Rudnytsky, ‘Series Editor’s Foreword,’ In: Judit Szekacs-Weisz and Tom Keve (eds.) *Ferenczi and his World: Rekindling the Spirit of the Budapest School* (New York: Routledge, 2018), p. xiii.

few.⁴²² Ferenczi's writings (at least prior to his [in] famous 'Confusion of Tongues' paper [1932]) were deemed by Freud to be 'pure gold'.⁴²³ For many years Ferenczi occupied the multiple roles of 'a disciple, a patient, a friend and a confidant,' of Freud's before eventually ending his days as a 'dissident' who was rumoured by his detractors to have descended into 'madness' shortly before his death.⁴²⁴

The receptivity to psychoanalytic thinking manifested by the Budapest school was evidenced across a wide range of disciplines, including those of literature, ethnography, education and economics. Moreover, its influence infiltrated the wider socio-cultural milieu to the extent that its pervasiveness could be discerned even in café conversations and folk song parodies.⁴²⁵ Psychoanalytic themes and teachings were explored and promulgated across a range of publications, including medical journals such as *Gyógyászat* ('Therapy'), journals on literary criticism such as *Nyugat* ('The West') and sociological journals such as *A Huszadik Század* ('The Twentieth Century'). These links were further strengthened by the decision to locate the 5th International Psychoanalytic Congress in Budapest. Moreover, during the course of this Congress, a wealthy benefactor named Antal Freund pledged the equivalent of half a million dollars to set up a publishing house and a library in Budapest. Then on the 25th April 1919 Ferenczi was appointed (albeit for only a brief period) as the first ever professor in psychoanalysis, an event which occurred in tandem with the establishment of the first ever department of psychoanalysis located within a medical university. In the light of such developments, it is not so surprising to find Freud making unfavourable comparisons between

⁴²² See *ibid.*, p. xxi for a more substantial listing of Ferenczi's most influential students and analysands.

⁴²³ Michelle Moreau-Ricaud, 'Healing boredom: Ferenczi and his circle of literary friends,' in: *op. cit.*, p. 87. Intriguingly, according to David Bakan, the phrase 'This is gold' was referenced by Freud in his description of the Jewish Kabbalah—see chapter three section five.

⁴²⁴ Bokanowski, *The Modernity of Sandor Ferenczi*, p. 3.

⁴²⁵ Judit Meszaros, 'Sandor Ferenczi and the Budapest School of Psychoanalysis,' *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* 7: 1 (2010), p. 71.

‘... the hostile indifference of the learned and educated ... in Vienna’ (1914) with the notably more receptive response to his teachings that he encountered in Budapest.⁴²⁶

However, these initial gains were subsequently to come under serious attack on a number of fronts. Ferenczi’s professorship was revoked on the 8th August 1919, in the context of the much wider unrest that occurred following the right-wing White Terror promulgated under Admiral Miklós Horthy. The repercussions that ensued from these events included the discontinuation of plans to set up a university clinic in Budapest and the transfer of Freund’s donation from Budapest to Vienna. The early 1920s also saw the first wave of emigration undertaken by those psychoanalysts who sought to flee the rise of the Soviet republic and the increase in anti-Semitism, as well as by those who simply did not wish to live under the White Terror, with its associated disregard for liberal values, descent into economic chaos and general civic disorder. A further wave of emigration amongst the psychoanalytic community took place between the years of 1938-1941 in response to the devastating political, social and economic consequences that ensued due to the rise of National Socialism.⁴²⁷

It has been remarked that the combined effects of these disastrous international events meant that ‘... important Hungarian ideas and plans on both the institutional and theoretical levels were realised somewhere else, in another country or on another continent’.⁴²⁸ Moreover, there are reasons to suppose that the associated effects of these destructive and disruptive processes were further compounded *within* the environs of institutionalised psychoanalysis

⁴²⁶ Ibid., pp. 71-72. For a more detailed exposition of these contextual themes, see Meszaros, *Freud and Beyond*, chapters one and two.

⁴²⁷ See Meszaros, *Freud and Beyond* for a lucid account of these historical episodes and their more long-term repercussions for the wider history of psychoanalysis.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

via the more covertly administered dynamics of *Todschweigen* ('death by silence') that were surreptitiously deployed by the proponents of a psychoanalytic 'orthodoxy' as a means of policing its professional boundaries against the 'heterodox' speculations promulgated by 'dissident' figures such as Ferenczi and Severn.⁴²⁹

4.2. The 'Occult' milieu of the Budapest School of psychoanalysis

Having very briefly set out the broader socio-historical context that shaped the formation of the Budapest School of psychoanalysis, we can now shift to a more focused engagement with the fin de siècle milieu of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Hungarian 'occultism,' the tenets of which arguably constituted a more fertile source of inspiration for the Budapest School of Psychoanalysis than is sometimes commonly supposed.⁴³⁰ Moreover, it is proposed that elements of this 'esoteric' discourse were initially 'introjected' and subsequently 'encrypted' within the ostensibly 'secular' discourse of psychoanalysis by the Budapest School, resulting in their covert yet pervasive dissemination across the wider psychoanalytic field via their incorporation into the evolving theories of object-relations in the works of Michael Balint and Melanie Klein in particular.⁴³¹ Indeed, it could be argued that this

⁴²⁹ See Arnold William Rachman, *Elizabeth Severn: The "Evil Genius" of Psychoanalysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), chapter seven for more on this theme. However, by way of providing a balance to this perspective, it is worth remarking that a case has been put forward for the existence of a *de facto* Ferenczi 'cult'—see Ferenc Erös, 'The Ferenczi Cult: Its Historical and Political Roots,' *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 13:1-2 (2004), pp. 121-128.

⁴³⁰ For a nuanced account of the role played by animal magnetism upon psychological thinking in Hungary, see Julia Gyimesi, 'Animal Magnetism and its Psychological Implications in Hungary,' in: Lukas Pokorny & Franz Winter (eds.) *The Occult Nineteenth Century: Roots, Developments, and Impact on the Modern World* (Cham, SW: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 59-83.

⁴³¹ As outlined in chapter three, the early psychoanalysts tended to use the term 'occultism' as a catch-all rubric to categorise a highly heterogeneous range of heterodox activities, such as spiritualism, theosophy, divination and astrology. With reference to my allusion to Ferenczi's theory of 'introjection' (1909), it has been suggested that 'By the concepts of introjection and projection Ferenczi created a potential bridge between psychoanalysis and psychical research,' Julia Gyimesi, 'Sandor Ferenczi and the problem of telepathy,' *History of the Human Sciences* 25: 2 (2012) p. 141.

imbrication of secular with religious modes of discourse was merely the latest iteration of an earlier transitional process within psychoanalysis that can be traced at least as far back as 1895:⁴³²

The trance states of mediums, the encrypted memories that came to the surface in several mediumistic manifestoes, the mysterious psychological and physical occurrences mediums produced were leading to further questions about altered states of consciousness, the functioning of the unconsciousness or subliminal layers, the theory of hypnotism and suggestion, and about the as yet unknown capacities of the human psyche in general...through the experiments of Freud and Ferenczi in the field of thought-transference the forming ideas of intersubjectivity, transference, countertransference, introjection and projection emerged ... In this sense the occupation of early psychoanalysts with the so-called 'occult' was an important complement to the evolution of psychoanalysis.⁴³³

'Spiritualism' (or 'spiritism') was introduced to Hungary in the late 1800s, in parallel with its spread throughout Europe more generally. While its proximate origins are attributed to the activities of the Fox sisters beginning in 1848 in the USA, its more distal antecedents can be traced back to figures such as Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and Anton Mesmer (1734-1815).⁴³⁴

⁴³² 'Freud's materialistic discourse and naturalistic framework for psychoanalysis ... was increasingly infiltrated by a stream of religious metaphors and images starting in 1895, although they remained mostly below the surface,' Carlo Bonomi, *The Cut and Building of Psychoanalysis: Volume II Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi* (Abingdon, 2018), p. 86.

⁴³³ Julia Gyimesi, 'Why "Spiritism"?' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 97 (2016), pp. 366-367. The author explicitly acknowledged her indebtedness to the work of André Haynal in this context.

⁴³⁴ It is worth remarking at this point that in Hungarian, the same term is used to denote both 'spiritualism' and 'spiritism'—see Gyimesi, 'Sandor Ferenczi and the problem of telepathy,' p. 145 n. 2. However, the latter term was more usually associated with the overtly 'metaphysical' system of Allan Kardec, while the former

In Hungary, two of the main contributors to the rise of spiritualism were Count Ferenc Szapáry and the Austrian Baron Lázár von Hellenbach, whose popularisation of mesmerism and spiritism extended as far as Hungary also. The first Hungarian spiritualist society—the Budapest Association of Spiritual Investigators—was founded in 1871 under the auspices of the physician Adolf Grünhut and the Baroness Adelma Vay, both of whom promulgated a version of the spiritist teachings of Allan Kardec (1804-1869). The latter of these two instigators arose to prominence through the combination of her numerous publishing activities, as well as her acquaintance with the famous Hungarian magnetizer, János Gárdos (whose reputation was sufficiently well-known as to be alluded to by Ferenczi in his correspondence with Freud). Over time, various other spiritualist organizations followed, such as the Hungarian Metapsychical Society, founded in 1932, which explicitly aligned itself with the French Nobel-prize winner Charles Richet. Yet despite such efforts, it has been remarked that a lack of scientific rigour with regards to its investigative processes persisted as a more general feature of Hungarian spiritualism—a state of affairs which put its ‘spiritist’ activities at variance with the more empirically-orientated approaches adopted in countries such as France, Germany and England.⁴³⁵

Having briefly introduced the wider socio-political context, as well as the more specific cultural ‘occult milieu,’ from within which the Budapest School of psychoanalysis took at least some of its inspiration, we are now in a position to move on to a consideration of some of the specific contributions made by two of its most significant representatives, namely Sándor Ferenczi and Elizabeth Severn (1879-1959). This chapter then concludes with a brief

tended to denote the more ‘experimental’ type of mediumship practiced in England and North America—see Gyimesi, ‘Why “Spiritism”?’, p. 358 n. 2.

⁴³⁵ See Gyimesi, ‘Why “Spiritism”?’ for a more elaborated exposition of this historical background to which this brief outline is indebted.

appraisal of the work of one of the neglected pioneers of ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology’—and the only psychoanalytic ‘heir’ to Elizabeth Severn—Nandor Fodor (1895-1964).

Like many of the early analysts, Ferenczi possessed both a professional and a personal interest in the occult, whilst Severn herself was an active exponent of a ‘secularising mysticism’.⁴³⁶ It is proposed that from within this context the Budapest School acted as a significant conduit for the introjection and elaboration of a ‘decentred’ psychoanalytic subject dialectically conjoined to an enigmatic (esoteric) *other*, thereby contributing to the dissemination of esoteric *traces* across the wider fabric of psychoanalytic metapsychology.⁴³⁷ In order to foreground these processes of encrypted transmission, a discourse analytic approach is adopted to draw out some of the thematic parallels conjoining Ferenczi’s investigations into trance and telepathy to their contemporary conceptual avatars, such as *reverie* and *projective identification*.⁴³⁸ By way of a preamble, some brief contextual background is provided in the form of a brief account of Ferenczi’s early paper on ‘Spiritism’ (1963 [1899]), and the correspondence exchanged between Freud and Ferenczi on the role of telepathy and ‘occultism’ in psychoanalysis. However, its central focus is devoted to those sections of Ferenczi’s *Clinical Diary* (1995 [1932]) that address the more explicitly ‘esoteric’ aspects of *Orpha* and *astra*. Ferenczi’s account of these enigmatic agencies is augmented by drawing upon the complementary perspectives provided by Severn in her book *The Discovery of the Self* (1933).

⁴³⁶ Rachman, *Elizabeth Severn*, pp. 260-261; Bonomi, *The Cut and Building of Psychoanalysis*, p.202.

⁴³⁷ For an illuminating in-depth exegesis of the concept of introjection in Ferenczi’s writings, see Chan (2015).

⁴³⁸ For useful accounts of the use of discourse analysis as applied to the study of esotericism, see Kennet Granholm, ‘Esoteric currents as discursive complexes,’ *Religion* 43:1 (2013), pp. 46-69; Kocku von Stuckrad, ‘Discursive study of religion: Approaches, definitions, implications,’ *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 25 (2013), pp. 5-25; Kocku von Stuckrad, ‘Discursive transfers and reconfigurations: Tracing the religious and the esoteric in secular culture’ in: Egil Asprem & Kennet Granholm (eds.) *Contemporary Esotericism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 226-243.

A number of commentators have referred to the ‘occult’ aspects of ‘Orpha’.⁴³⁹ The present paper seeks to build on these accounts by foregrounding the more explicitly ‘esoteric’ elements of Orpha and astra, thereby highlighting their comparative discontinuity with the tenets of classic Freudian metapsychology by emphasising their contiguity with the alternate consciousness tradition associated with figures such as F.W.H. Myers (1843-1901) William James (1842-1910) and Freud’s one-time collaborator Josef Breuer (1842-1925).⁴⁴⁰ As we shall see, the researches of Myers and James in particular into the *subliminal self* both drew upon and were in thematic resonance with the earlier mesmeric traditions of Romantic psychology, within whose cultural milieu Freudian metapsychology came to occupy a ‘defensive’ position, the robustness of which was both destabilised by and imbricated with a persistent underlying sense of ambiguous contiguity vis-à-vis its ostensibly discredited Romantic predecessors.

4.3. ‘Remaining friends with the spirits’—Sándor Ferenczi on spiritism and telepathy⁴⁴¹

Following the conclusion of his studies at the University of Vienna, Ferenczi returned to Budapest in 1898, where he began military service as a junior physician attending to the treatment of venereal diseases in Rókus Hospital. In order to provide himself with some intellectual stimulation during his spare time, he embarked upon a series of informal

⁴³⁹ See, for example, Galina Hristeva, ‘“Primordial Chant”: Sándor Ferenczi as an Orphic Poet,’ *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 79 (2019), pp. 517-539; Donald Kalsched, *Trauma and the Soul: A psycho-spiritual approach to human development and its interruption* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Raluca Soreanu, ‘The time of reliving: For an eventful psychoanalysis,’ *Vestigia* 2:1 (2019), pp. 132-153.

⁴⁴⁰ Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Adam Crabtree, ‘The transition to secular psychotherapy: Hypnosis and the alternate consciousness paradigm,’ in: E.R. Wallace & J. Gash (eds.) *History of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology* (New York: Springer, 2008), pp. 555-586.

⁴⁴¹ Sándor Ferenczi, *The Clinical Diary of Sándor Ferenczi* [ed. Judith Dupont: trans. Michael Balint & Nicola Zarday Jackson] (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1995 [1932]), p. 15.

investigations into spiritualistic phenomena. These included his attendance at séances run by the well-known professor of chemistry, Emil Felletár.⁴⁴² Ferenczi's interest in such matters identified him as a tacit participant in the alternate consciousness tradition within psychiatry.⁴⁴³ Ferenczi's own experiments with automatic writing were to lead to some interesting consequences:

I went to the junior physicians' room and engaged in 'automatic writing,' frequently discussed by the spiritualists of the time; Janet had already published interesting observations on this phenomenon ... I picked up a pencil and, holding it loosely in my hand, I pressed against a blank piece of paper. I decided to let the pencil 'move on its own,' letting it write 'on its own,' letting it write whatever it wished. Senseless scribbles came first, then letters, words...and finally whole sentences ... Finally the pencil suggested the following: 'Write an article on spiritualism for Gyogyaszat [Healing Arts], the editor will be interested ... The next day I wrote my first medical paper entitled 'On spiritualism'. I started off from the phenomenon of automatism which I had observed in myself. My conclusion ... was that the so-called occult phenomena do not contain anything supernatural and should be viewed as manifestations of the functioning of the unconscious. I sent the article to the Gyogyaszat.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² See Gyimesi (2014, 2016) for some very useful background on the various sources of Hungarian spiritualism that were active both prior and subsequent to the fin de siècle period. Spiritualism, in particular, constituted an important nexus for the transmission of esoteric trance phenomena into the wider cultural milieu (Gutierrez, 2016, pp. 240-242).

⁴⁴³ Ferenczi explicitly referenced Myers' work in his correspondence with Freud—see Thomas Rabeyron & Renaud Evrard, 'Historical and contemporary perspectives on occultism in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence,' *Recherches en psychoanalyse* 13:1 (2012), p. 106.

⁴⁴⁴ Sándor Ferenczi, 'My friendship with Miksa Schachter,' *British Journal of Psychotherapy* [trans. Borisz Szegal] 9:4 (1993 [1917]), p. 430.

This was the initiatory context to Ferenczi's first academic publication, 'Spiritism' (1899), which also marked the beginnings of his friendship with the editor of the medical journal *Gyogyaszat*, Mika Schächter.⁴⁴⁵ Ferenczi's subsequent publications for this journal included a review of Leopold Löwenfeld's *somnambulismus und Spiritismus*, as well as a translation of Sante de Sanctis's essay, 'The miraculous element in dreaming'. In a footnote to this latter work, Ferenczi strongly emphasised the importance of employing a rigorous scientific methodology in psychical research; a matter in respect to which Ferenczi—in a review written by him in 1900 concerning a book by the physician and spiritist Lajos Wajdits entitled *Essays on the Field of Spiritism*—took the author to task for his perceived methodological deficiencies. However, despite his advocacy for methodological rigour, it was Ferenczi himself who subsequently became the subject of a critical review, during the course of which he was roundly criticised by its anonymous author for his confused account of the theories of Alexander N. Aksakof (1832-1903), whose work he had cited in his 1899 paper on spiritism.⁴⁴⁶ It was in the context of debates such as these that Ferenczi's early interest in occult topics became intertwined with his deepening commitment to psychoanalysis.⁴⁴⁷

Although Ferenczi did not subscribe to a spiritualistic world-view, his later writings judiciously utilise the terminology of psychical research whilst mapping out a complex bio-psycho-esoteric *bricolage*, the heuristically developed tenets of which entailed an engagement with 'the non-materialistic reality of spiritualistic phenomena, which he tried to

⁴⁴⁵ Sándor Ferenczi, 'Spiritism,' [trans. N. Fodor] *The Psychoanalytic Review* 50A: 1 (1963 [1899]).

⁴⁴⁶ Gyimesi, 'Why "spiritism"?', pp. 372-373.

⁴⁴⁷ 'I believe that the special interest of the early writings comes not so much from their scientific content but from the occultist, vitalist and mystic tendencies which are part and parcel of Ferenczi's life-work, and contributes to the creation of mythologies—through his own sexual-philogenetic [sic] mythology described most consistently and at the same time with poetic erudition in *Thalassa*,' Erös, 'The Ferenczi Cult,' p. 126.

interpret with psychological concepts'.⁴⁴⁸ This can be deduced, for example, from the various discourse entanglements encountered in the *Clinical Diary*, in which Lamarckian biology is invoked to provide a 'scientific' scaffolding to be erected alongside the purported phenomenon of *teleplasty* (a term coined by Frederic Myers to denote the supposed materialization of psychical phenomena).⁴⁴⁹ Ferenczi himself possessed a sophisticated awareness of the complex emotional and intellectual tensions aroused by his deployment of such conceptually disparate terminologies, the ambiguities arising from which he discussed with Freud in their correspondence:

My 'inclination towards occult matters' is not 'secret' but rather quite obvious—it is also not actually an inclination towards the occult, but rather an urge towards de-occultization, at the base of which there may be, in the final analysis, magic-religious strivings, which I am defending myself against by wanting to bring clarity to these matters. I am convinced of the actuality of thought transference. I believe, incidentally, that even an indication that *prophecies* are possible, could or should not force one to abandon the scientific basis. Certainly I know of no proven case of foretelling the future.⁴⁵⁰

While Ferenczi was willing to consider the possibility of precognition, such speculations were decidedly antipathetical to Freud's world-view.⁴⁵¹ Yet despite their disparity of outlook

⁴⁴⁸ Julia Gyimesi, 'Sándor Ferenczi and the problem of telepathy.' *History of the Human Sciences* 25: 2 (2012), p. 134.

⁴⁴⁹ Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, p. 117; Jay Johnson, 'The Body in Occult Thought,' in: Christopher Partridge (ed.) *The Occult World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 659-671.

⁴⁵⁰ Ernst Falzeder & Eva Brabant (eds.) *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi: Volume 2, 1914-1919* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 70-71.

⁴⁵¹ See Freud's letter to Ferenczi ([75] 11/10/1909) in: Eva Brabant, Ernst Falzeder & Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud & Sandor Ferenczi: Volume 1, 1908-1914* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 79. In this letter, Freud stipulates that the possibility of precognition should be precluded as a hypothesis from all future 'experiments' on the grounds that it is 'patent nonsense'. It is

on this particular topic, their respective approaches to occult matters more generally were often in harmony with each other. Both drew heavily on their clinical experiences as the basis for their discussions.⁴⁵² As early as 1909, for example, we find Ferenczi alluding to the clinical phenomenon of ‘psychic induction,’ which he appears to reference as a conceptual precursor to his subsequent speculations on telepathy and clairvoyance.⁴⁵³ By 1910 we find Ferenczi writing to Freud in the following highly excitable terms:

Interesting news in the transference story. Imagine, *I am a great soothsayer, that is to say, a reader of thoughts!* I am reading my patients’ thoughts (in my free associations). The future methodology of ψ A [psychoanalysis] must make use of this ... This method will be suitable to catch the patient’s *most active* complexes at work.—It can be refined even more!

When I come to Vienna, I will introduce myself as ‘court astrologer to the psychoanalysts’.⁴⁵⁴

Due to the complex array of intellectual and emotional conflicts evoked within Freud and Ferenczi by the ‘occult’ during the course of their voluminous correspondence, it is perhaps not so surprising to find that flights of ‘manic excitement’ are recurrently interspersed by

evident through a close reading of the relevant papers that Freud also went to significant lengths to exclude this possibility from his writings on telepathy.

⁴⁵² See, for example, the following: ‘A breakthrough came when Ferenczi started to work with his masochistic, homosexual patient who referred quite often to Ferenczi’s hidden thoughts in his free associations. This case seemed to be reliable for Freud, too, and turned both of them to the question of thought-transference,’ (Gyimesi, ‘Why “Spiritism”?’’, pp. 367-368). For a useful overview of occult themes in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence, see Thomas Rabeyron & Renaud Evrard, ‘Historical and contemporary perspectives on occultism in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence,’ *Recherches en psychoanalyse* 13: 1 (2012).

⁴⁵³ Ferenczi to Freud ([73] 05/10/1909): in: Brabant et al, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud & Sándor Ferenczi: Volume 1*, p. 77.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ([182] 22/11/1910), pp. 235-236.

reactive retreats into caution. We see this, for example, in the guise of Ferenczi's assurances to Freud that he is 'not in danger of lapsing into occultism,' a remark that he rather incongruously appends as an addendum to a series of speculations, which include the following appositely ambiguous remark: 'Finally, the time would come for the assumption of a real clairvoyance, telepathy, etc'.⁴⁵⁵ Throughout this period (1908-1913), Jung too appeared as an active participant in what amounted—at times—to being a three-way colloquium on psychoanalysis and the occult.⁴⁵⁶ By 1914 we find that Ferenczi's emotional conflicts on these topics have become subject to a triune process of 'splitting,' the nature of which he describes to Freud in the following terms: 'My "Occultism" is very distinctly separated from my other knowledge and doesn't disturb it in any way; it is completely free of *mysticism*'.⁴⁵⁷ In the light of Ferenczi's subsequent researches into psychic permeability, his desire on this occasion to construct a rigid epistemological bulwark constitutes an intriguing development, whose origins might conceivably be entangled with his avowed 'urge towards de-occultization'. Moreover, his deployment of what amounts to an *ad hoc* idiolect structured around an idiosyncratic deployment of the rubrics of 'occultism,' 'mysticism' and 'other knowledge' is highly suggestive of a defensively appropriated semiotic *encryption* typified by processes of *enigmatic signification* as described in chapter one.

In contrast to Ferenczi's (not to mention Myers') view of anomalous phenomena as constituting an expression of latent human potentialities, Freud initially pursued an alternative avenue of enquiry, in which he sought to develop a theory of 'thought transference' that reduced it from being a phenomenon of potential psychoanalytic interest to

⁴⁵⁵ Ferenczi to Freud ([73] 05/10/1909) in: Brabant et al, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud & Sándor Ferenczi: Volume 1*, p. 77.

⁴⁵⁶ Joel Whitebook, *Freud: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 248; Tom Keve, 'The Jung-Ferenczi Dossier,' *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 75 (2015), pp. 94-109.

⁴⁵⁷ Ferenczi to Freud ([520] November 1914) Falzeder et al, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud & Sándor Ferenczi Volume 2*, p. 33

‘a purely somatic one’.⁴⁵⁸ In an exemplary instance of boundary demarcation operating as an ironic art form, we find Freud opining to Ferenczi the following disclaimer during the course of their deliberations regarding a purported instance of ‘mind reading,’ which the latter experienced with the ‘medium’ Frau Seidler—‘Should one now, as a result of this experience, commit oneself to occultism? Certainly not; it is only a matter of thought transference’. Freud immediately follows this shift from an ‘occult’ into a ‘psychical research’ register by counselling Ferenczi—‘Let us keep absolute silence with regard to it’. Shortly thereafter in the same letter, Freud goes on to remark—‘We want to initiate Jung at a later date, when we have more to go on’.⁴⁵⁹

The combined tropes of ‘secrecy’ and ‘initiation’ are thematically prominent throughout this exchange, thereby imbuing its contents with a decidedly esoteric penumbra.⁴⁶⁰ Yet despite this epistolary web of occlusions and evasions, we can still discern in these exchanges Freud taking his first tentative steps towards the development of a specifically psychoanalytic view of telepathy, which included the proposal that psychoanalytic hermeneutics could be applied to this phenomenon as a means for decoding the inevitable communicative ‘distortions’ that would colour such communications due to the accompanying unconscious processes of symbolisation, displacement and condensation that they would be subject to.⁴⁶¹ In his 1922 paper Freud maintained a position of strategic neutrality in which an undertow of emotional conflict is nonetheless discernible.⁴⁶² While Freud’s views on thought-transference

⁴⁵⁸ Freud to Ferenczi ([75] 11/10/1909) in: *ibid.*, p. 80. See also Paul Roazen, *Freud and his Followers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 235.

⁴⁵⁹ Freud to Ferenczi ([75] 11/10/1909) in: Brabant et al, 1993, p. 81.

⁴⁶⁰ On the topic of ‘secrecy’ in esotericism, see: Antoine Faivre, ‘Secrecy,’ in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 1050-1060.

⁴⁶¹ Sigmund Freud, ‘Dreams and Telepathy’ (1922) in: George Devereux (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and the Occult* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974 [1953]); and in Sigmund Freud, S.E. IV (1922 [1925]), pp. 408-435.

⁴⁶² In the first paragraph Freud begins with the disclaimer: ‘You will learn nothing from this paper of mine about the enigma of telepathy; indeed, you will not even gather whether I believe in the existence of

fluctuated over time, its potential theoretical importance for psychoanalysis was nonetheless deemed to be sufficiently significant as to justify its inclusion as a topic for discussion in his *New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis* (1933). As for Ferenczi, it has been remarked that he arrived at a position whereby he no longer sought to ‘... differentiate the essence of telepathy and psychoanalysis. He is incorporating Seidler, or what she represents, into his psychoanalytic thinking’.⁴⁶³ Such exchanges paralleled wider debates within the international community of psychologists, which centred round a controversy that initially arose during the Fourth Psychological Congress (1900) regarding the degree of legitimacy that could properly be ascribed to the conduct of psychological research into psychical phenomena. The impact of these discussions led not only to heated debates concerning the validity of ‘occultism’ as a legitimate subject matter for academic research, but also threw into question the professional parameters that should be applied to the discipline of psychology itself. Attempts to distinguish the boundaries separating ‘psychology,’ ‘psychical research,’ ‘mysticism,’ ‘magic’ and the ‘occult’ became a focus for controversy. Notably, some of these disputes centred round diverging conceptualisations of the phenomenon of dissociation, the associated attributes of which were located across a spectrum ranging from the pathological (Janet) through to the exceptional (Myers, James, Richet).⁴⁶⁴

Ferenczi went so far in his investigations as to draw up a detailed plan for a never-to-be-written research study into psychical phenomena, the parameters of which were to include a systematic review of the ‘vast occultistic [sic] literature,’ as well as a field trip to visit ‘the Pythia in Berlin’ (Frau Seidler). Freud not only engaged enthusiastically with this proposal by

“telepathy” or not,’ an assertion that mirrors the rhetorical aporia of his concluding sentence, ‘I have no opinion; I know nothing about it’ (Freud, 1922, p. 69, p. 86).

⁴⁶³ Yiu-kee Chan, *Experience into psychoanalytical ideas: A psychobiographical study of Ferenczi’s introjection*. PhD thesis, University of Essex (2015), p. 160.

⁴⁶⁴ See Ann Taves, ‘A tale of two congresses: The psychological study of psychical, occult and religious phenomena, 1900-1909,’ *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences* 50: 4 (2015), pp. 376-399.

offering to expedite its publication, but also proposed a title-‘The Ucs. and Thought Transference,’ adducing—quite reasonably—that ‘The term induction is not well enough known by the public’. For good or ill, this work never materialised, not least because the ‘induction experiments’ with Frau Seidler proved to be a ‘complete failure’.⁴⁶⁵ Yet despite these not inconsiderable setbacks, Ferenczi’s belief in the potential significance of occult phenomena for psychoanalysis persisted:

On examining Ferenczi’s accounts on his occult experiences, it is clear that his primary aim was to find a rational, scientific explanation for the supposed supernatural phenomena ... it seems that Ferenczi was much more involved in spiritistic practices than his letters to Freud or his published papers reveal.⁴⁶⁶

The comparative neglect thus far paid to the contribution made by Ferenczi to the theories of his analysand, Melanie Klein (1882-1960) is something that has been remarked upon.⁴⁶⁷ While their views notably differed with regards to their respective emphases on the role of actual trauma in the genesis of psychopathology, Ferenczi’s influence can nonetheless be discerned in Klein’s ideas concerning the role of primitive phantasies in early infantile experience, as well as in the importance that she attributes to pre-Oedipal processes and the primacy of the mother.⁴⁶⁸

The significance of projective identification as a ‘psychoanalytic imaginary’ that manages simultaneously to function as a ‘stop concept’ is something that is worth pausing to reflect

⁴⁶⁵ Brabant et al, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi*, pp. 379-380.

⁴⁶⁶ Gyimesi, ‘Why “spiritism”?’ p. 374.

⁴⁶⁷ Isabel Hernandez-Halton, ‘Klein, Ferenczi and the Clinical Diary,’ *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 75: 1 (2015), pp. 76-85.

⁴⁶⁸ Annie Reiner, ‘Ferenczi’s “astra” and Bion’s “O”: a clinical perspective’ in: Annie Reiner (ed.) *Of Things Invisible to Mortal Sight: Celebrating the Work of James S. Grotstein* (London: Karnac, 2017), p. 134.

upon at this point.⁴⁶⁹ The idea of ‘stop concepts’ (*concepts butoirs*) is derived from the work of the French sociologist of psychical research and animal magnetism Bernard Méheust: ‘notions which, no doubt possessing an incontestable heuristic power, have at the same time a strategic function, that of limiting, by tacit convention, an obscure domain of experience, thus stopping the flight of thought into the unknown’.⁴⁷⁰ More dramatically, they have also been likened to ‘defence mechanisms invoked by the internal logic of a social system in a cognitive or metaphysical emergency’.⁴⁷¹ While subsequent developments in the concept of projective identification were indebted to the legacies of Ferenczi and Balint, its pre-Kleinian origins have been traced to the work of the Italian analyst Eduardo Weiss, who corresponded with Freud on their shared interest in telepathy and the unconscious transmission of thoughts.⁴⁷² The persistence of purportedly ‘uncanny’ phenomena continues to haunt the peripheries of contemporary conceptualisations of projective identification.⁴⁷³

Two contemporary commentators have concluded that the significance of the occult themes explored in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence lies predominantly in their potential importance as harbingers for future developments in psychoanalytic theories of

⁴⁶⁹ Raluca Soreanu, ‘The psychic life of fragments: Splitting from Ferenczi to Klein,’ *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 78 (2018), p. 440 n.4; Mikita Brottman, *Phantoms of the Clinic: From Thought-transference to Projective Identification* (London: Karnac, 2011), p. 107.

⁴⁷⁰ Méheust, cited in Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 221.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁴⁷² André Haynal, ‘A “wise baby”? Ferenczi’s Presence’ in: Arnold Rachman (ed.) *The Budapest School of Psychoanalysis: The Origin of a Two-Person Psychology and Emphatic Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 94; Riccardo Steiner, ‘Who influenced whom? And how?: —a brief series of notes on E. Weiss, M. Klein (and I. Svevo) and the so-called “origins” of projective and introjective identification,’ *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 80 (1999), pp. 367-375; James S. Grotstein, ‘...But At The Same Time And On Another Level...’: *Psychoanalytic Theory and Technique in the Kleinian/Bionian Mode: Volume 1* (London: Karnac, 2009), p. 271. For a useful overview of the development of Klein’s concept of projective identification, see Elizabeth Spillius, ‘The emergence of Klein’s idea of projective identification in her published and unpublished work,’ in Elizabeth Spillius & Edna O’Shaughnessy (eds.), *Projective Identification: The Fate of a Concept* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 3-18.

⁴⁷³ See Brottman, *Phantoms of the Clinic*.

intersubjective communication.⁴⁷⁴ It is true that Freud and Ferenczi's nascent comprehension of such processes was necessarily constrained by the inherently limited theoretical vistas that were available to them at the time of their original formulation. However, there are at least two significant caveats that should be attached to such a reading. The first is to emphasise the importance of eschewing an unduly 'progressive' approach to intellectual history, in which more recent theoretical developments are thereby assumed to be inherently superior to their conceptual predecessors. Second, it is important to engage with the possibility that concepts can also be defensively appropriated, thereby resulting in the formation of 'stop concepts' functioning as cultural defence mechanisms intended to discourage speculation outside of the pre-existing parameters of a tacitly shared cultural milieu.⁴⁷⁵

For example, the diachronic discourses structurally aligned to divergent terminologies such as 'telepathy' (19th century psychical research), 'projective identification' (Kleinian psychoanalysis) and 'unconscious intersubjective communication' (contemporary relational psychoanalysis) are in many respects virtually interchangeable when viewed from a phenomenological or clinical perspective; yet they remain as mutually exclusive as regards to their discrete conceptual alignments as signifiers denoting membership of particular theoretical and professional groupings. In tandem with their demarcatory functions, these competing descriptive frameworks serve also to place limits upon what might be thought in terms of the professionally permissible *episteme* (Foucault). In this respect, they share some of the characteristics of those 'ontology-making practices' associated with the psychological 'sciences'.⁴⁷⁶ Notably, all three of these discourses share as a common denominator the

⁴⁷⁴ Rabeyron & Evrard, 'Historical and contemporary perspectives on occultism in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence,' pp. 98-111.

⁴⁷⁵ Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible*, p. 199.

⁴⁷⁶ Sonu Shamdasani, 'Psychologies as ontology-making practices: William James and the pluralities of psychological experience' in: Ann Casement & David Tacey (eds.) *The Idea of the Numinous: Contemporary Jungian and Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-19.

absence of a robust *explanatory* framework capable of maintaining their existence outside of the conceptual framework engendered and sustained by their respective semiotic networks. In order to more clearly illustrate the extent of their semiotic instability, we can creatively revise an observation originally made by Maria Torok on the topic of telepathy so as to arrive at the following *varifocal* re-description of the phenomenon:⁴⁷⁷

Telepathy [or projective identification, or unconscious intersubjective communication] would be the name [s] of an ongoing and groping research that—at the moment of [their] emergence and in the area of [their] relevance—had not yet grasped either the true scope of [their] own inquiry or the conceptual rigour necessary for [their] elaboration.⁴⁷⁸

Having briefly touched on the significance of the role played by the ‘occult’ in the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence in the development of their respective ideas, we can now embark on a consideration of Ferenczi’s mature views on this topic as described in his posthumously published *Clinical Diary*. As we shall see, his speculations concerning the role of trauma as a catalyst to anomalous modes of experience was to be radically influenced by his involvement with his most controversial and theoretically important patient—the so-called ‘evil genius,’ Elizabeth Severn.

⁴⁷⁷ i.e. ‘... conflicting accounts that can nevertheless be understood as philosophically necessary juxtapositions,’ Dmitry Okropiridze, ‘Interpretation reconsidered: The definitional progression in the study of esotericism as a case in point for the varifocal theory of interpretation’ in: Egil Asprem & Julian Strube (eds.) *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 224. Notably, the deployment of this kind of interpretative strategy arguably implies the adoption of a dual-aspect monist metaphysics.

⁴⁷⁸ Nicolas Abraham & Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* [trans. Nicholas Rand with Foreword by Jacques Derrida] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), p. 86.

4.4. From metapsychology to magnetic gnosis

I do not exclude the possibility that delusional productions contain more objective reality than we have assumed until now. From the very beginning I was inclined to think that the hallucinations of the insane, or at least a part of them, are not imaginings but real perceptions, stemming from the environment and from the psyches of other human beings, which are accessible to them—precisely because of their psychologically motivated hypersensitivity—whereas normal people, focusing only on immediate matters of direct concern to them, remain unaffected. What comes to mind in this connection is the so-called occult powers of certain people, and the close relationship and easy transition between the two states: paranoia and psychic superperformance (Ferenczi 1995 [1932], p. 58).⁴⁷⁹

It has been proposed that the essential themes encountered in Ferenczi's *Clinical Diary* centre round three major preoccupations or axes:

- 1 a theoretical axis that concerns trauma and its metapsychological status in pathologies at the limits of classical analysis;
- 2 a technical axis, closely linked to his conceptions of trauma, which leads him to establish and experiment with 'mutual analysis';
- 3 lastly, a personal axis, which concerns the crux of his relations with Sigmund Freud, the analysis of their disagreement, as well as his attempt to elaborate it.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, p. 58.

⁴⁸⁰ Thierry Bowkanoski, *The Modernity of Sándor Ferenczi* (New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 65.

To these three axes, I would like to propose a fourth, namely an esoteric axis, to denote a persistent preoccupation with occult themes in psychoanalysis that was shared to a marked degree both by Ferenczi and by Severn. However, before we can evaluate the evidence that might be adduced in support of this contention, it is important to begin with a frank acknowledgement of the various challenges associated with embarking upon such an exegetical reading of Ferenczi's *Clinical Diary*, not the least of which relates to its intertextual imbrication with a series of other closely related writings, including the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence, Freud's 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1937), and most especially Severn's book, *The Discovery of the Self: A Study in Psychological Cure* (1933).⁴⁸¹

To further complicate matters of perspective and of authorship, we find that in Severn's *The Discovery of the Self*, there exists not only a disguised account of her own analysis with Ferenczi, but also an anonymised case study of Ferenczi himself, both of these studies presumably being based upon their controversial explorations in undertaking a 'mutual analysis'. Moreover, Severn's *Discovery of the Self* has itself been construed as a 'mutual publication,' the contents of which reportedly received Ferenczi's blessing prior to his death.⁴⁸² One commentator has gone so far as to describe it as 'an indispensable companion volume to the *Clinical Diary*'.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ On the role of the Freud-Ferenczi correspondence as an adjunct to reading the *Clinical Diary*, as well as some remarks on Freud's thinly anonymised commentary on his relationship with Ferenczi as depicted in his 1937 paper, see the 'Introduction' by Judith Dupont, pp. xi-xvii & pp. xxv-xxvi.

⁴⁸² Rudnytsky, 'Introduction' in: Elizabeth Severn, *The Discovery of the Self: A Study in Psychological Cure* [ed. with an intro. by Peter L. Rudnytsky & an essay by Adrienne Harris and Lewis Aron] (Abington: Routledge, 2017 [1933]), p. 10—see also Severn, *The Discovery of the Self*, pp. 96-99 & 107-110; Arnold W. Rachman, *Elizabeth Severn: The 'Evil Genius' of Psychoanalysis* (Abington: Routledge, 2018), p. 28; Carlo Bonomi, *The Cut and the Building of Psychoanalysis: Volume II Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi* (Abington: Routledge, 2018), p. 203; Peter L. Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis: Ferenczi, Severn, and the Origins of Trauma Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2022), p. 8.

⁴⁸³ Rudnytsky, 'Introduction,' p. 2.

The relationship between Ferenczi and Severn was complex and multi-faceted, with Ferenczi referring to Severn on various occasions as occupying a spectrum of roles, including those of ‘main patient,’ ‘colleague’ and ‘teacher’.⁴⁸⁴ Consequently, it seems appropriate to contextualise her wider importance to psychoanalysis by situating her within the lineage of female patients, beginning with ‘Anna O’ (Bertha Pappenheim), who were themselves significant contributors to the development of psychoanalytic theory.⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, there is reason to suppose that Severn herself inhabited, at times, a liminal space located somewhere between that of ‘medium’ and ‘analysand,’ thereby conjoining her psychoanalytic lineage to those of her similarly liminal precursors who inhabited an analogous interstitial ‘lineage’ located somewhere between the psychological and the esoteric; figures such as Friederike Hauffe (1801-1829), Hélène Smith (1861-1929), Elfriede Hirschfeld (1873-?) and Hélène Preiswerk (1881-1911), the collective importance of whom for the encryption of the esoteric within psychoanalytic theory has thus far only been partially explored.⁴⁸⁶ It was only retrospectively that Severn was able to conclude that ‘an omnipotent’ part of her ‘intelligence’ to which she assigned the title ‘Orpha,’ had ‘scoured the universe’ in order to find the one, unique individual ‘who owing to his special personal fate could and would make amends for the injury that had been done to her’.⁴⁸⁷ It was on the basis of such experiences that Severn managed to reach ‘a remarkably prescient position, to which Ferenczi would catch up only in his final period’ that enabled them to collaborate in the creation of an

⁴⁸⁴ Bonomi, *The Cut and Building of Psychoanalysis*, p. 202. Notably, in his *Clinical Diary*, Ferenczi alludes to Severn’s insistence on ‘our joint technique, which penetrates into deep metaphysical regions’ (pp. 46-47).

⁴⁸⁵ Harris & Aron, in Severn, *The Discovery of the Self*, p. xv.

⁴⁸⁶ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘A Woman Alone: The Beatification of Friederike Hauffe née Wanner’ in: Anne-Marie Korte (ed.) *Women and Miracle Stories: A Multidisciplinary Exploration* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 211-247; Theodore Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars* [ed. and with an intro. by Sonu Shamdasani] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994 [1899]); Ernst Falzeder, *Psychoanalytic Filiations: Mapping the Psychoanalytic Movement* (London: Karnac, 2015), pp. 19-48; Sonu Shamdasani, ‘“S.W.” and C.G. Jung: mediumship, psychiatry and serial exemplarity,’ *History of Psychiatry* 26:3 (2015), pp. 288-302.

⁴⁸⁷ Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, p. 121.

innovative theory of trauma structured around dissociative phenomena and the splitting of the ego.⁴⁸⁸

There are reasons to suppose that Severn had a catalysing effect upon Ferenczi's already quite considerable interest in the relationship between psychoanalysis and the occult. Her influence can be deeply felt throughout Ferenczi's work on the 'dialogue of the unconscious,' a clinical idea whose attributes are in many ways analogous to those of the phenomenologically contiguous concept of telepathy coined by F. W. H. Myers in 1882.⁴⁸⁹ In the light of such comparisons, it might not be too much of an exaggeration to describe Severn as Ferenczi's *esoteric muse*.⁴⁹⁰ Severn was herself a student of esoteric spiritualities, including Gnosticism, Transcendentalism, Theosophy and the Fourth Way, the respective tenets of which could collectively be grouped under the rubric of *New Age Religion*.⁴⁹¹ In Rachman's estimation, she 'was part of the development of secularizing mysticism'.⁴⁹² Severn was critical of the naïve materialism of psychoanalysis and sought to reassert what she conceived to be its transcendental potentialities via a series of portmanteau neologisms, such as *psychognosis* and *psychosophy*, for which she drew inspiration from a diverse range of

⁴⁸⁸ Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis*, p. 15.

⁴⁸⁹ Arnold W. Rachman, 'The Psychoanalysis between Sándor Ferenczi and Elizabeth Severn: Mutuality, unconscious communication, and the development of countertransference analysis,' *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 39:3-4 (2019), pp. 279-280; Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy: 1870-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴⁹⁰ 'Certainly, in [Severn's] espousal in *The Discovery of the Self* of "psychognosis" ... she was more attuned than either Thompson or de Forest to his mystical tendencies or what Groddeck, in a letter to Gizella Ferenczi after Sándor's death, termed his "ascent to the stars,"' Rudnytsky, in Severn, 2017 [1933], p. 6.

⁴⁹¹ See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: SUNY, 1998). In order to longitudinally contextualise the esoteric aspects of Severn's *The Discovery of the Self* (1933), it is important to note that her first book *Psychotherapy: its Doctrine and Practice* (1913) addressed the topic of 'telepathic healing,' whilst in 1914 she published an article on alchemy in the journal of the Alchemical Society (a society of which she was also a member). Her second book *The Psychology of Behaviour* (1917) similarly engaged with themes of an explicitly 'metaphysical' nature (Fortune, 1993, p. 437).

⁴⁹² Rachman, *Elizabeth Severn*, p. 261.

figures that included Plotinus, Ouspensky and William James.⁴⁹³ Although Severn's writings have been criticised for being 'pious, mystical, unprofessional and unscholarly,' some of her more trenchant criticisms and proposed revisions to classical Freudian approaches have been given a revisionist gloss as untimely interventions prefiguring developments in contemporary relational psychoanalysis and transpersonal psychology.⁴⁹⁴ One commentator has even described her as a 'forerunner of the Independent tradition in psychoanalysis'.⁴⁹⁵ Moreover, she could be equally trenchant in her criticism of concepts such as telepathy that were commonly employed within psychical research:

It has been my experience many times, for instance, so to enter into the mind of a person whom I wished to help that the *identity* between him & me became practically complete for the time being. The word "telepathy" is quite inadequate to express this kind of connection. Nothing is communicated because this implies distance and there is no distance ... One must have, I suppose, great *permeability* to accomplish this psychic transfusion and identification.⁴⁹⁶

In some respects, Severn's mature writings can be thought of as inhabiting an ambiguous territory contiguous both to psychoanalysis and to the 'somnambulist' tradition of 19th

⁴⁹³ See Severn, *The Discovery of the Self*, p. 56, pp. 148-149. In Vida's estimation, "'Orpha" ought to be regarded more as Severn's construct than Ferenczi's: it belonged to *her* experience, and the quotation marks accompanying it in the diary are suggestive that the *name itself* came from Severn,' Vida, 2005, p. 8. Given Severn's acknowledged role as Ferenczi's 'teacher,' I consider it reasonable to apply a similar line of reasoning to Ferenczi's introduction of the portmanteau neologism 'psychognostic' in his 'Notes and Fragments' (Ferenczi, 2018 [1932], p. 263). Moreover, Severn's deployment of the neologism *psychognosis* situates her own work within the esoteric 'lineage' of ancient Gnosticism, which sought to heal the primal traumas of existence by means of 'ecstatic ascents into the transcendental realms'—Severn, *The Discovery of the Self*, p. 148; April D. DeConick, *The Gnostic New Age* (New York: Columbia Press, 2016), p. 192.

⁴⁹⁴ Jeffrey Masson, cited in Nancy A. Smith, "'Orpha Reviving" Towards an honorable recognition of Elizabeth Severn,' *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 7: 4 (1998), p. 241. However, Smith concludes that Severn's writing do in fact prefigure many developments in contemporary psychoanalysis—*ibid.*, p. 245.

⁴⁹⁵ Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis*, p. 56.

⁴⁹⁶ Severn, *The Discovery of the Self*, p. 149.

century psychiatry, which drew heavily upon ideas of dissociation stemming back via Janet to Mesmer, the descendants of which were subsequently to be found within the Jungian and transpersonal schools of psychology.⁴⁹⁷ While the extent of Severn's significance for subsequent generations of psychoanalysts is a matter for ongoing debate and reappraisal, her influence can be discerned, for example, in the work of Nandor Fodor (1895-1964), a hitherto well-known but subsequently neglected pioneer of 'psychoanalytic parapsychology' who, somewhat enigmatically, referred to himself as being a metaphorical 'son' of Elizabeth Severn.⁴⁹⁸

The transition of mythologem from Oedipus to Orpha has been conceptualised as possessing a 'paradigmatic' significance for psychoanalysis, marking a shift in its therapeutic focus 'from unravelling the unconscious drives to the revival of dead parts'.⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, this shift in

⁴⁹⁷ On the notion of a 'somnambulist' tradition within psychology, see Christian Kerslake, *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 58-61. For a helpful overview of the progression of themes in Severn's three published books, see Smith, "'Orpha reviving'". Notably, the themes explored in the seventh and final chapter of Severn's last book, *The Discovery of the Self* (1933) constitute an exemplary instance of the 'sacralization of psychology' as described by Hanegraaff in *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, pp. 224-229.

⁴⁹⁸ 'It was from Elizabeth Severn, Sandor Ferenczi's pupil, that I learned the elementaries [sic] of a psychoanalytic approach to mediums. It was a standard joke between us that I was her illegitimate son, until one day she told me, now you can consider yourself legitimate' (Nandor Fodor, *The Unaccountable* (New York: Award Books, 1968), p. 105). Severn was a member of the International Institute for Psychical Research from 1934 onwards, acting both as Fodor's analyst and 'consultant' during the course of his investigation into the notorious Thornton Heath poltergeist case. While I was unable to find any evidence that Fodor was a member of the International Psychoanalytic Association, he did manage to acquire membership of the NPAP/American Psychological Association and the editorial board for the *Psychoanalytic Review*, while his own publications clearly indicate that he practiced as a psychoanalytically-informed clinician (Weber [e-mail correspondence, 11/02/2020]; Rudnytsky [e-mail correspondence, 22/01/21]; Kate Summerscale, *The Haunting of Alma Fielding: A True Ghost Story* (London: Bloomsbury Circus, 2020), pp. 107-108, pp. 243-245, p. 304). That both Severn and Fodor acquired general recognition as 'psychoanalysts' during their lifetimes (despite the fact that neither party was recognised as such by the IPA) hints at the possibility of a psychoanalytic 'transmission of knowledge' occurring outside of accredited institutional frameworks. It is worth remarking in this context that Ferenczi considered Severn to be a 'capable psychologist' and regarded her as being in a training analysis with him—see Galina Hristeva, "'Primordial Chant". Sándor Ferenczi as an Orphic Poet,' *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 79 (2019), p. 518; Sándor Ferenczi, 'Child Analysis in the Analysis of Adults,' in: *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psychoanalysis* [ed. Michael Balint; trans. Eric Mosbacher et al] (New York: Routledge, 2018 [1931]), p. 133). The significance of Fodor's work for 'psychoanalytic parapsychology' is discussed at the end of this chapter and again in the conclusion.

⁴⁹⁹ Hayuta Gurevich, 'Orpha, Orphic functions, and the Orphic analyst: Winnicott's "regression to dependence" in the language of Ferenczi,' *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 76 (2016), pp. 322-340.

mythological registers has been interpreted as providing ‘a metapsychologically plausible account of a particular kind of clairvoyance’ entailing ‘an enduring modification of the ego, that can be imagined as a new kind of psychic agency, neither (conscious) ego nor superego’.⁵⁰⁰ Since the figure of ‘Orpha’ is presented throughout the *Clinical Diary* in a notably obscure and fragmentary fashion, it will be useful at this point to briefly revisit these references, alongside those of its proximate analogue, ‘astra’.⁵⁰¹ As we shall see, two of the more intriguing implications arising from this line of enquiry include its problematization of attempts to clearly demarcate the ‘psychoanalytic’ from the ‘occult,’ in tandem with an ensuing genealogical entanglement of the ‘occult’ with the ‘metapsychological’ via the *tertium quid* of *magnetic gnosis* (a term which signifies a particular ‘mystical’ variant of trance phenomena originating within the mesmeric traditions, the attributes of which will be explored in more detail later in this chapter). Moreover, this *tertium quid* is accessed via the ‘initiatory’ role played by extreme (or ‘sacred’) trauma acting as the catalyst for transcendent modes of experience—‘In the moment of the trauma some sort of omniscience about the world ... makes the person in question ... more or less clairvoyant’.⁵⁰² By February 1932, we find Ferenczi ruminating on the following:

To what extent do those who have ‘gone mad’ from pain, that is, those who have departed from the usual egocentric point of view, become able through their special situation to experience a part of that immaterial reality which remains inaccessible to us materialists? And here the direction of research must become involved with the so-called occult. Cases of thought transference during the analysis of suffering people are extraordinarily frequent. One sometimes has the impression that the reality of such

⁵⁰⁰ Soreanu, ‘The psychic life of fragments,’ p. 438.

⁵⁰¹ Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, pp. 206-207.

⁵⁰² Ferenczi, ‘Notes and Fragments’ (1920 [1930-1932]) in: Sándor Ferenczi, *Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psychoanalysis* [ed. M. Balint; trans. E. Mosbacher et al.] (New York: Routledge, 2018 [1955]).

processes encounters strong emotional resistance in us materialists ... It is possible that here we are facing a fourth ‘narcissistic wound,’ namely that even the intelligence of which we are so proud, though analysts, is not our property but must be replaced or regenerated through the rhythmic outpouring of the ego into the universe, which alone is all knowing and therefore intelligent.⁵⁰³

While Ferenczi does not explicitly refer to Severn (‘R.N’.) in this entry, it is hard not to surmise from this that his expressed views were—to at least some degree—influenced by their exchanges on these topics. Notably in this regard, both Myers and his colleague William James subscribed to a theory of mind in which the respective pathways leading to psychopathology and transcendence could in practice prove difficult to disentangle due to their respective tendencies to utilise the same channels for obtaining access to conscious awareness.⁵⁰⁴ Thurschwell has argued that:

For Ferenczi, occult powers are aligned with psychosis; paranormal hypersensitivity and psychic illness issue from the same causes ... Ferenczi’s theory of trauma suggests that the psychosis caused by a childhood sexual attack results in a collapsing of the body and mind which can initiate clairvoyant or telepathic hypersensitivity.⁵⁰⁵

Having highlighted the role of trauma as a potential catalyst to transcendence, we can now move on to consider the role of ‘Orpha’—and its equally enigmatic analogue, ‘astra’—as the exemplars of a shift in register from the domain of the metapsychological to the realm of

⁵⁰³ Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, p. 33.

⁵⁰⁴ Eugene Taylor, *William James on Consciousness beyond the Margin* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 81.

⁵⁰⁵ Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 146.

magnetic *gnosis*. We can surmise from this transposition that both ‘Orpha’ and ‘astra’ exist within the parameters of the *paraconceptual*, an isomorphic ‘space’ within which the psychological, the psychical and the occult co-exist in a tensional state of reciprocal superimposition.⁵⁰⁶

Ferenczi’s references to Orpha occur on only a few occasions in his *Clinical Diary* (12th January; 17th January; 1st May; 12th June). His first reference to Orpha is as follows and relates to his analysis of Severn (‘R.N.’):

The enormity of suffering, plus helplessness and despair of any outside help, propels her towards death; but as conscious thought is lost, or abandoned, the organizing life instincts (“Orpha”) awaken, and in place of death allow insanity to intervene. (The same “Orphic” powers appear to have been already present at the time of the first shock [i.e. childhood sexual abuse aged eighteen months].) The consequence of the second shock [i.e. childhood sexual abuse aged five years] is a further “fragmentation” of the individuality. The person now consists of the following fragments: (1) A being suffering purely psychically in his unconscious, the actual child, of whom the awakened ego knows absolutely nothing. This fragment is accessible only in deep sleep, or in deep trance, following extreme exertion or exhaustion, that is, in a neurotic (hysterical) crisis situation ... (2) A singular being, for whom the preservation of life is of “coûte que coûte” significance. (Orpha.) This

⁵⁰⁶ As we saw in chapter one, the term *paraconceptual* is taken from the work of the conceptual artist Susan Hiller (1940-2019): ‘Just to the side of Conceptualism and neighbouring the paranormal I... the “paraconceptual” opens up a hybrid field of radical ambiguity where neither Conceptualism nor the paranormal are left intact: the prefix ‘para’ allows in a force of contamination through a proximity so great that it threatens the soundness of all boundaries,’ Alexandra M. Kokoli, ‘Moving Sideways and Other “Sleeping Metaphors”: Susan Hiller’s Paraconceptualism,’ in: Ann Gallagher (ed.), *Susan Hiller* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), p. 144. My introduction of this term in the present context is indirectly indebted to the seminal work on demarcation in psychoanalysis and the occult undertaken by Julia Gyimesi (2009).

fragment plays the role of the guardian angel; it produces wish-fulfilling hallucinations, consolation fantasies; it anesthetizes the consciousness and sensitivity against sensations as they become unbearable.⁵⁰⁷

While neither Ferenczi nor Severn made any explicit allusions in their writings to the etymological or mythological background to Orpha, the term itself has obvious resonances with the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice—most notably with the theme of a ‘fragmented’ yet ‘enshrined’ ‘Orphic intelligence,’ brought into existence as a response to devastating experiences of trauma and loss.⁵⁰⁸ Orpheus was one of the few Greek mythological heroes who managed both to descend to the underworld and to return again.⁵⁰⁹ However, it is also possible that the rubric of Orpha may have harkened back to the figure of a goddess who was at one time a part of the ancient Orphic cult, thereby constituting a ‘feminine’ variant of the Orpheus myth.⁵¹⁰ As we have seen, the term itself appears to have originated with Severn and there is evidence that it was even used by her, on occasion, as a kind of *nom de plume*.⁵¹¹ Nonetheless, in the estimation of one recent commentator, ‘Orpha ... is the hallmark, leitmotif and backbone of his [Ferenczi’s] work prefigured there even before he met Severn ... From the very beginning he has had an Orphic mind’:⁵¹²

The Orpha fragment was Severn’s guardian angel, providing her with a positive functioning part of her personality which could cope with trauma by anesthetizing the self from unbearable sensations. It also produces fantasies, hallucinations that allowed

⁵⁰⁷ Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, pp. 8-9,

⁵⁰⁸ Nancy A. Smith, ‘“Orpha reviving”: Towards an honorable recognition of Elizabeth Severn,’ *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 7: 4 (1998), p. 242 n.2.

⁵⁰⁹ Rachman, *Elizabeth Severn*, p. 265.

⁵¹⁰ Gurevich, ‘Orpha, Orphic Functions, and the Orphic analyst,’ p. 329.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 327. See also Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis*, pp. 129-130.

⁵¹² Hristeva, ‘“Primordial chant,”’ p. 518.

Severn to restore her emotional equilibrium. At moments of severe trauma, when Severn felt she was on the verge of suicide or insanity from which she could not return, the Orpha function of her personality split itself off from the traumatised self with a fragment as a life-enhancing mechanism.⁵¹³

Ferenczi's clinical work with Severn often required him to focus upon those forms of pathological fragmentation that entailed either a regression to infantile states or a precocious progression embarked upon for defensive purposes. Notably, Ferenczi credited his indebtedness to Severn for assisting him in his discoveries concerning psychotic splitting and dissociation.⁵¹⁴ In an addendum in his *Clinical Diary*, Ferenczi briefly alluded to a third, enigmatic fragmentation, which he termed 'astra,' (the Latin word for 'stars') in which the deleterious consequences of trauma effectively function as a catalyst for accessing transcendent states of consciousness, so that:

... the soul passes through a hole in the head into the universe and shines far off in the distance like a star (this would be clairvoyance, which goes beyond understanding the aggressor and understands the whole universe, so to speak, in order to be able to grasp the genesis of even such a monstrous thing).⁵¹⁵

The frequent appearance of trance phenomena constitutes a striking feature of Ferenczi's later writings.⁵¹⁶ The combined use of relaxation, regression and trance states featured prominently in Ferenczi's work with Severn, and it is evident that Severn's extensive prior experience in

⁵¹³ Rachman, *Elizabeth Severn*, p. 265.

⁵¹⁴ Christopher Fortune, 'Sandor Ferenczi's analysis of "R.N.": A critically important case in the history of psychoanalysis,' *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 9: 4 (1993), pp. 438-439.

⁵¹⁵ Ferenczi, *Clinical Diary*, pp. 206-207.

⁵¹⁶ See Ferenczi, 'Child analysis in the analysis of adults,' as well as the numerous references made to trance states in the *Clinical Diary*.

the use of trance states actively contributed to Ferenczi's development of therapeutic regression.⁵¹⁷ Notably, access to 'Orphic frenzy' was traditionally associated with trance states and alterations in consciousness.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, the *mythos* of Orpheus is one that looms large across the multiple historical trajectories of Western esotericism, up to and including the various European fin de siècle magical orders, the teachings of which it seems reasonable to surmise that Severn might at least have had some passing acquaintance with.⁵¹⁹ Consequently, while the conceptual coordinates of Ferenczi's work with Severn may have originated from within the ambit provided by Freudian metapsychology, the ensuing trajectory of their combined discoveries subsequently became imbricated not only with the alternate consciousness paradigm associated with figures such as William James and F. W. H. Myers, but was imbued with traces of a more explicitly esoteric provenance.

As a point of comparison, James (who drew extensively upon the pioneering work of his friend and colleague Myers) held that psychic fragments possessed the potential to develop into 'seemingly independent personalities' with the potential to access 'permanently superior dimensions not normally accessible to waking awareness'.⁵²⁰ Moreover, he construed psychotherapy, mental healing and psychical phenomena to be closely contiguous to each other. James avowed a personal belief in 'supernormal' forms of healing and cognition even

⁵¹⁷ Fortune, 'Sandor Ferenczi's analysis of "R.N.,"' p. 438; Rachman, *Elizabeth Severn*, p. 246-249; Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis*, p. 84.

⁵¹⁸ Yulia Ustinova, *Divine Mania: Alteration of Consciousness in Ancient Greece* (Abington: Routledge, 2018), pp. 115-117.

⁵¹⁹ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 22, p. 199; Dylan M. Burns, 'Ancient Esoteric Traditions: Mystery, Revelation, Gnosis' in: Christopher Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World* (Abington: Routledge, 2015), pp. 17-19; Charles Stein, 'Ancient Mysteries' in: Glenn Alexander Magee (ed.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 10-12; Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis*, p. 34. For a helpful overview of Orphic themes in 19-20th century culture, see Kocku von Stuckrad, *A Cultural History of the Soul: Europe and North America from 1870 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), pp. 28ff.

⁵²⁰ Eugene Taylor, *William James on Exceptional Mental States: The 1896 Lowell Lectures* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), p. 6.

whilst admitting that he possessed ‘no vestige of a theory’ as to what lay behind such occurrences. His theory of mind embraced a ‘polypsychism’ entailing ‘a confederation of psychic entities,’ within which ‘mediumship’ was viewed as a non-pathological state of ‘alternating personality’ that had the potential to access transcendent states of mind.⁵²¹ James surmised that ‘if there are supernormal powers, it is through the cracked and fragmented self that they enter’.⁵²² While he did not view hypnosis as being directly causative of paranormal events, he nonetheless believed that trance states were favourable for the appearance of phenomena such as telepathy and clairvoyance.⁵²³

The phenomenon of hypnosis has been described as ‘... a kind of fairy palace, less than real, but more than illusion’ whose manifest attributes constitute ‘... an enigma, a phenomenon without a theory’.⁵²⁴ Moreover, ‘... any attempt to make an epistemological object out of the trance was beset by its variability’⁵²⁵. As we have seen, while notable efforts have been made to situate Orpha within its historical and literary contexts, I would like to propose that these accounts can be usefully augmented by aligning Orpha with its mesmeric and somnambulistic precursors located within Romantic psychology; and, more particularly, to an esoteric variant of these traditions referred to in the literature as *mystical magnetism* or *magnetic gnosis* previously alluded to in chapter two.⁵²⁶ Moreover, while the phenomenon of mesmerism is

⁵²¹ Ibid., p. 12, p. 35, p. 74.

⁵²² Op. cit., p. 110.

⁵²³ Taylor, *William James on exceptional Mental States*, p.

⁵²⁴ Alan Gauld, *A History of Hypnotism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 623-624; Mikkel Borch-Jacobson, ‘Simulating the unconscious,’ *Psychoanalysis and History* 7 (2005), p. 5.

⁵²⁵ Sonu Shamdasani, ‘Psychologies as ontology-making practices: William James and the pluralities of psychological experience’ in: Ann Casement & David Tacey (eds.) *The Idea of the Numinous: Contemporary Jungian and Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 12.

⁵²⁶ Gauld, *A History of Hypnotism*, pp. 141-178; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Magnetic gnosis: Somnambulism and the quest for absolute knowledge’ in: Andreas B. Kilcher & Phillipp Theisohn (eds.) *Die Encyklopädie der Esoterik: Allwissenheitsmythen und universalwissenschaftliche Modelle in der esoterik der Neuzeit* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2010), pp. 118-134.

commonly misconstrued as a distant historical artefact, there are reasons for supposing that its demise is more frequently presumed than proven.⁵²⁷

In order to briefly illustrate what might be understood by these essentially synonymous terms, we can refer to Carl Alexander Ferdinand Kluge's textbook on animal magnetism (1811), in which the author delineated six discrete levels of magnetic somnambulism, culminating in a final stage entailing 'universal clarity,' through which the percipient purportedly transcended time and space and attained a state of clairvoyance.⁵²⁸ Arguably the most famous exemplar of *magnetic gnosis* was the Swabian somnambulist Friedricke Hauffe (1801-1829), whose story was immortalised by the physician and poet Justinus Kerner (1786-1862) in his book, *The Seeress of Prevorst*.⁵²⁹

Living in a semi-permanent state of somnambulistic trance, Hauffe presented the whole gamut of magnetic endowments: the gifts of second sight and precognition, predicting deaths, revealing maladies, prescribing remedies, and being extremely sensitive to certain substances. She even saw spirits of the dead and maintained a semi-permanent communication with them.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Anne Harrington, 'Hysteria, hypnosis, and the lure of the invisible: The rise of neo-mesmerism in fin de siècle French Psychiatry' in: William F. Bynum, Roy Porter & Michael Shepherd (eds.) *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry* vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 226-246.

⁵²⁸ Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Fontana, 1994 [1970]), p. 78.

⁵²⁹ Justinus Kerner, *The Seeress of Prevorst* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011 [1829]); Hanegraaff, 'A Woman Alone'.

⁵³⁰ Bernard Méheust, 'Animal magnetism/mesmerism' in: Hanegraaff et al. *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, p. 80. As Gauld has observed: 'Whether or not one believes in such phenomena, there is no escaping the fact that they were, and for upwards of fifty years remained, a central feature of the animal magnetic scene. Nor did they by any means wholly disappear with the advent of hypnotism,' Gauld, *A History of Hypnotism*, p. 62.

As we saw in chapter two, Kerner's book was not only in its day a prodigious literary success, it was also 'the first monograph devoted to an individual patient in the field of dynamic psychiatry'.⁵³¹ With reference to the hypothesis that trauma may have the potential to act as a catalyst for transcendence alluded to in chapter one, it is worth observing there is evidence to suggest that Hauffe may herself have been the victim of childhood sexual abuse.⁵³² Donald Kalsched has highlighted some notable parallels between Jung and Ferenczi's ideas on trauma:

... in both Ferenczi and Jung ... we find not only primitive, infantile material, but something 'progressed', uncanny, and of a 'higher' order than primitive narcissism ... Ferenczi found himself staring through the violent ruptures of trauma into an alternative world of extraordinary, 'mythopoetic' inner presences—from Orphic guardians to wise babies ... Ferenczi's research with his severely traumatized patients points in the same direction as Jung's—towards an implicate order of 'supra-personal' powers co-mingled with the mundane ordinary realities of ego-development in the body.⁵³³

Having set out the proximate and distal 'origins' of what might be described as an 'Orphic trajectory' within psychoanalysis, we can now conclude this chapter with a brief account of the work of the protégé and only psychoanalytic 'heir' to Elizabeth Severn, the 'psychoanalytic parapsychologist' Nandor Fodor.⁵³⁴ As we shall see in the conclusion to this thesis, Fodor's attempts to forge a rapprochement between Freudian and Jungian

⁵³¹ Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, p. 81.

⁵³² See Hanegraaff, 'A Woman Alone'.

⁵³³ Donald Kalsched, 'Trauma and daimonic reality in Ferenczi's later work,' *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 48:4 (2003), pp. 484-486.

⁵³⁴ Marie Coleman Nelson, 'Nandor Fodor: 1895-1964,' *The Psychoanalytic Review* 51B:2 (1964), p. 155; Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis*, p. 145, p. 148.

conceptualisations of the unconscious can be construed as untimely interventions prefiguring subsequent developments in post-Bionian psychoanalysis.

4.5. 'The Haunted Mind'—The Psychoanalytic Parapsychology of Nandor Fodor

It is an understandable—if unfortunate—state of affairs that the Hungarian psychoanalyst, parapsychologist and journalist Nandor Fodor has been relegated to the footnotes of psychoanalytic history.⁵³⁵ Despite his numerous publications in the fields of psychoanalysis and psychical research, his work has largely been consigned to the peripheries of both disciplines due to the inherently liminal nature of his investigations. More specifically, his preoccupation with sexuality was frequently frowned upon in the more conservative circles of psychical research; whilst his 'occult' interests (as well as his openness to Jungian analytical psychology) placed him on the periphery of the established norms of the psychoanalytic establishment.⁵³⁶ Fodor was under no illusions as to the significance of his work—as well as its associated costs—observing that 'to be a pioneer—as I have been—is an ungrateful task. It means simply that many people will brand you as crazy'.⁵³⁷ The ensuing neglect of his work is undeserved, insofar as he made important—albeit frequently unacknowledged—

⁵³⁵ For an entertaining account of Fodor's life, see Summerscale, *The Haunting of Alma Fielding*, pp. 29ff. See also Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis*, pp. 141-148 for a more in-depth exegesis of Fodor's psychoanalytic affiliations and his relations with Severn.

⁵³⁶ 'Within the Establishment ostracism of colleagues who take parapsychology seriously continues to prevail,' Marie C. Nelson, 'Contributions on Parapsychology: Introduction,' *The Psychoanalytic Review* 56A: 1 (1969), p. 4. See also Joanna Timms, 'Phantasm of Freud: Nandor Fodor and the Psychoanalytic Approach to the Supernatural in Interwar Britain,' *Psychoanalysis and History* 14 (2012), pp. 5-27 for a helpful overview of Fodor's life and work. On the significance of Jung for Fodor, see Nandor Fodor, 'Jung's Sermons to the Dead,' *The Psychoanalytic Review* 51A: 1 (1964), pp. 74-78. Fodor argued that Freud's findings had to be augmented with those of Jung and Groddeck if an adequate conceptualisation of the unconscious was to be arrived at—see Nandor Fodor, *The Search for the Beloved: A Clinical Investigation of the Trauma of Birth and Pre-natal Condition* (New York: University Books, 1949), p. 326, p. 398.

⁵³⁷ Allen Spraggett, 'Nandor Fodor: Analyst of the Unexplained,' *The Psychoanalytic Review* 56A: 1 (1969), p. 135.

contributions in a number of areas, including those of psychoanalytic parapsychology, the psychoanalysis of pre-birth states, dream analysis and the development of a framework for understanding the transgenerational transmission of trauma.⁵³⁸ Notably, his book *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation* (1962) was deemed by one commentator to constitute a ‘landmark’ in the development of dream psychology; while his posthumously published *Freud, Jung, and Occultism* (1971) was described by one of its reviewers in the following laudatory terms: ‘This book is an indispensable guide to all practitioners who seek a deeper understanding of their patients and are interested in the theory of the mind and the modus operandi of psi. It is a jumping-off point to myriad future discoveries’. This same reviewer goes on to describe Fodor as ‘a master dream analyst’.⁵³⁹ Moreover, Marie Coleman Nelson assessed Fodor’s contributions to psychoanalysis to be in the same category of major psychoanalytic ‘dissidents’ such as Jung, Ferenczi, Reich and Stekel.⁵⁴⁰ Notably, Fodor’s approach to the treatment of trauma was ahead of its time and was indebted to the ideas of Ferenczi and Severn.⁵⁴¹ Nonetheless, due to his comparative obscurity, it will be helpful to begin with a brief biographical outline before embarking upon a tightly focused exposition of two of the key findings arising from his researches into ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology’.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁸ See the following: Berthold Eric Schwarz, ‘Freud, Jung and Occultism by Nandor Fodor: A Review,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review* 60: 4 (1973-1974), pp. 636-638; Bronson Feldman, ‘The Haunted Mind: A Psychoanalyst looks at the Supernatural by Nandor Fodor: A Review,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review* 47B: 2 (1960), 111-113; Marie Coleman Nelson, ‘Nandor Fodor: 1895-1964,’ pp. 155-157; Fodor, *The Search for the Beloved*; Stephen Maret, *Introduction to Prenatal Psychology* (Church Gate Books, 2009); Nandor Fodor, *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation* (New York: University Books, 1951). According to one commentator, Fodor ‘elaborated Rank’s “birth trauma” into a theory of prenatal traumata based on telepathic contact between the mother and her unborn child’—see Allen Spraggett, ‘Nandor Fodor: Analyst of the Unexplained,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review* 56A:1 (1969), p. 128.

⁵³⁹ See Spraggett, ‘Nandor Fodor: Analyst of the Unexplained,’ p. 131; Schwartz, ‘Freud, Jung, and Occultism by Nandor Fodor,’ p. 637. The following texts are referenced in these remarks: Fodor, *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation*; Fodor, *Freud, Jung, and Occultism*.

⁵⁴⁰ Nelson, ‘Contributions on Parapsychology,’ pp. 5-6.

⁵⁴¹ See Kate Summerscale, *The Haunting of Alma Fielding* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 311.

⁵⁴² My use of the term ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology’ in the present context is taken from Nelson, ‘Nandor Fodor: 1895-1964,’ p. 155,

Nandor Fodor (previously Friedlander) was the sixteenth of eighteen siblings born in the Hungarian town of Berengszász on the 13th May 1895. After obtaining a doctorate in law from the Royal Hungarian University of Science, Fodor emigrated to the United States of America in 1921 to pursue a career as a journalist. He married Amaria Iren in 1922 with whom he had one daughter, Andrea. Fodor's chance discovery of Hereward Carrington's *Modern Psychic Phenomena* (1919) had a profound effect upon him and led to both parties developing a life-long friendship. While Fodor did not consider himself to be 'psychic,' this did not prevent him from seeking tutelage in 'occult' breathing and automatic writing techniques from the 'spiritualist' writer Marjorie Livingston. In 1926 Fodor had an opportunity to interview Sándor Ferenczi, who provided him with a model for his subsequent efforts to combine psychoanalysis with psychical research. In 1929 Fodor left the USA for England after being offered the post of personal secretary to the millionaire newspaper magnate Lord Rothmere, a position which also gave him the opportunity to pursue a journalistic career on Fleet Street whilst deepening his knowledge of psychical research and psychoanalysis through his contact with figures such as Elizabeth Severn, who not only acted as Fodor's analyst, but who also took on the role of his 'consultant' during the course of his investigations into the case of Alma Fielding. From 1934-1938 Fodor was employed as the Research Officer for The International Institute for Psychical Research, during which time he participated in a series of increasingly psychoanalytically-informed investigations into supernatural phenomena, including the Thornton Heath poltergeist case (1938), his report into which Fodor considered to be his most significant contribution to psychical research. Fodor's work on this investigation was subsequently lauded by Freud, whilst costing him his post as Research Officer due to the controversy that arose in the wake of his identification of

early sexual trauma as constituting the main aetiological context for the purported ‘manifestations’ arising from this case.⁵⁴³ In Freud’s estimation, Fodor’s:

... turning away from interest in whether the observed phenomena were genuine or fraudulent, your turning towards the psychological study of the medium and the uncovering of her previous history seem to me to be the important steps which will lead to the elucidation of the phenomena under review.⁵⁴⁴

However, whilst his book-length publications and journalistic writings did much to popularise the application of psychoanalytic ideas as an explanatory schema for understanding alleged psychical phenomena, his persistent attempts to develop a rapprochement between both disciplines tended to alienate the more ideologically committed of both camps. In Fodor’s estimation:

For sixty years, psychical research has gone round in a vicious circle ... it has failed to give due consideration to the essentially psychological nature of mediumistic phenomena. I am convinced that the exploration of the unconscious minds of mediums by the means provided in psychoanalysis would solve many mysteries and would lead to discoveries of considerable importance both to psychology and psychical research.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ This brief account of Fodor’s life is indebted to the following sources: Summerscale, *The Haunting of Alma Fielding*; Nandor Fodor, *The Haunted Mind: A Psychoanalyst looks at the Supernatural* (Garrett Publications: New York, 1959); Fodor, *The Unaccountable*; Timms, ‘Phantasm of Freud’; Anonymous, ‘Nandor Fodor’: <http://survivalafterdeath.info/researchers/fodor.htm> (downloaded 20/04/2020).

⁵⁴⁴ Correspondence from Sigmund Freud to Nandor Fodor (1938), cited in Nelson, ‘Nandor Fodor: 1895-1964,’ pp. 155-156. For the full text of this letter, see Fodor, *The Haunted Mind*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁴⁵ Nandor Fodor (1945), cited in Timms, ‘Phantasm of Freud,’ p. 12.

Towards the end of his life during an interview in which he reflected on the course of his life and career, Fodor made a series forthright observations on the topics of psychoanalysis and psychical research, during which he remarked that ‘Freud was practically a mystic [who was] kept under restraint by his own followers,’ before going on to observe that ‘... we do not have to understand something to know that it is’.⁵⁴⁶ Although Fodor concluded that ‘[p]sychic phenomena do exist,’ he was nonetheless highly parsimonious in his judgements, asserting that over the course of a lifetime of research spanning a period of some forty years, he had encountered only three cases that he considered to possess evidential value for post-mortem survival. In the estimation of one of his psychoanalytic peers, Fodor’s approach to such questions was adjudged to be one that combined ‘healthy scepticism with an open-minded research approach that deserves emulation’.⁵⁴⁷ The former of these traits is evidenced in his publications and can be seen, for example, in a series of ‘reductive’ interpretations regarding Swedenborg’s *Dream Diary*, the experience of ‘mystical participation,’ astral travel, Theosophy, reincarnation and automatic writing.⁵⁴⁸ It could be legitimately argued that Fodor possessed a more comprehensive knowledge of occult, esoteric and parapsychological topics comparative to that small number of his psychoanalytic peers who pursued a similar interest in such matters, and his contributions correspondingly reflect the diversity of his interests.⁵⁴⁹ Fodor’s importance as a theoretician and researcher into ‘psychoanalytic

⁵⁴⁶ Spraggett, ‘Nandor Fodor: Analyst of the Unexplained,’ pp. 131-132.

⁵⁴⁷ Fodor, *The Haunted Mind*, p. 309; Fodor, *The Unaccountable*, p. 161; Nelson, ‘Contributions on Parapsychology,’ p. 8.

⁵⁴⁸ Fodor, *The Search for the Beloved*, p. 67, p. 173, pp. 207-208. On Fodor’s views regarding the ‘unreliability’ of automatic writing, see Fodor, *The Unaccountable*, p. 45.

⁵⁴⁹ Fodor published the well-received *Encyclopaedia of Psychic Science* (1933) and was friendly with a wide range of individuals involved with psychical research and the translation of ‘esoteric’ literature (including G.R.S. Mead, a notable translator of ‘Gnostic’ and hermetic texts). Moreover, his writings contain numerous references to a wide range of ‘esoteric’ and ‘occult’ figures, such as John Dee (1527-1608), Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), Justinus Kerner (1786-1862), F.W.H. Myers (1843-1901), Théodore Flournoy (1854-1920) and Hélène Smith (1861-1929)—see Fodor, *The Unaccountable*, p. 220; Fodor, *The Haunted Mind*, p. 262; Fodor, *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation*, p. 130, p. 163. Fodor supported the work of figures such as Jules Eisenbud (1908-1998), psychoanalyst and pioneering investigator into the paranormal. Eisenbud was a major contributor to research into the role of paranormal phenomena (especially telepathy and precognition) in psychoanalysis—for a helpful overview and appraisal of Eisenbud’s work, see Richard Reichbart, *The*

parapsychology' can be illustrated by briefly summarising his work on the role of telepathy in psychoanalysis and his investigations into an obscure phenomenon for which he coined the term 'poltergeist psychosis'.

Fodor came to the study of telepathic dreams through the discovery of uncanny parallels arising between the contents of his own dreams and those of his wife and daughter.⁵⁵⁰ Early on in his book-length study of dream interpretation, Fodor observed that 'the unconscious has its own channels of awareness. What we call "telepathy" appears to be one such channel'.⁵⁵¹ While he frankly acknowledged in an earlier study into prenatal states that he had no special insights into the actual mechanisms that facilitated telepathy, he nonetheless speculated that it could entail an 'archaic method of communication antedating the development of speech'.⁵⁵² In Fodor's estimation, the chief contribution of Freud's 1933 paper on telepathy lay in its deployment of dream interpretation as a means for unearthing those latent telepathic communications that would not otherwise be recognizable as such. However, Fodor's researches also led him to elaborate upon Freud's original findings:

The telepathic dream, regardless of its stimulating role, reflects like a mirror the contents of the unconscious mind of the agent, paralleling it by similar contents in the recipient's mind which are shaped into a personal dream. The similarity of parallelism of psychic content may be the predisposing factor rendering telepathy a possibility ...

In other words, telepathic communications can only be received because there exists

Paranormal Surrounds Us: Psychic Phenomena in Literature, Culture and Psychoanalysis (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2019), pp. 6-7, 50-57, 100-102. For details concerning some of Fodor's peers in 'psychoanalytic parapsychology,' see Fodor, *The Haunted Mind*, p. 13. See also the authors collected in George Devereux (ed.) *Psychoanalysis and the Occult* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974 [1953]).

⁵⁵⁰ Fodor, *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation*, p. 164,

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁵² Fodor, *The Search for the Beloved*, p.328. Fodor's knowledge of the associated literature is extensive as can be inferred from his citing no less than twelve papers (including two of his own) in support of his argument.

in the dreamer's unconscious a psychic content which, in its latent meaning, corresponds to the manifest content of the message.⁵⁵³

Moreover, when Fodor alludes in passing to the notion of 'Displacement of affect by way of telepathy,' it is difficult not to construe this idea as being phenomenologically contiguous to evolving ideas concerning 'communicative' forms of counter-transference translated into the idiom of psychical research.⁵⁵⁴ While Fodor was parsimonious regarding the claims that he made concerning 'the hypothetical but by no means impossible telepathic interaction between mother and child,' he nonetheless considered the potential for further research in this area to be of particular significance.⁵⁵⁵ In Fodor's estimation, 'unrecognised telepathy' constituted a significant—albeit unacknowledged—role in the 'emotional interchange between analyst and patient,' the enigmatic dynamics of which are more frequently elaborated upon in the clinical literature under the rubric of psychoanalytic 'intuition'.⁵⁵⁶ Moreover, he believed that the role of 'unrecognised telepathy' in the 'analytic transference' constituted a topic worthy of further research.⁵⁵⁷ However, it is in the area of dream interpretation that the clinical implications of Fodor's researches into telepathy become most apparent:

It may be objected that in the author's technique of dream interpretation considerable play is allowed for analytic intuition. The answer is that once telepathic associations are admitted, what appears to be intuition may turn out to be only the unconscious

⁵⁵³ Fodor, *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation*, p. 164.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 339, p. 327.

⁵⁵⁶ Fodor, *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation*, p. 204.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

perception of a content in the patient's mind which the analyst himself brings into consciousness.⁵⁵⁸

Fodor subscribed to the views of Dr. J. N. Rosen, who proposed that 'everybody's unconscious perfectly understands everybody else's unconscious'; consequently, Fodor's view of telepathy was essentially that of a faculty that operated predominantly on an unconscious level, and which tended to be most prevalent between individuals amongst whom there already existed a strong emotional tie.⁵⁵⁹

In Fodor's estimation, it was his concept of 'Poltergeist Psychosis' that constituted his most important contribution to psychoanalytic parapsychology.⁵⁶⁰ Fodor freely acknowledged that his deployment of this term was essentially descriptive, since the mechanisms of this 'psycho-biological disorder' were essentially unknown, although he did consider it to be 'an episodic mental disturbance of schizophrenic character' frequently associated with the temporary occurrence of amnesiac and dissociative states of mind.⁵⁶¹ However, Gyimesi has proposed that it was through the researches of figures such as Fodor, that:

... the idea of hysterical conversion ... gained its true parapsychological significance: if it is possible to produce physical symptoms within the body, then it might also be

⁵⁵⁸ Op. cit., pp. xii-xiii. Fodor's speculations on such topics arguably prefigure by more than several decades some of the theoretical developments encountered in post-Bionian theories of *reverie*—see, for example, Thomas Ogden, *Reverie and Interpretation* (London: Karnac, 1999).

⁵⁵⁹ Fodor, *New Approaches to Dream Interpretation*, pp. 204-205.

⁵⁶⁰ Fodor, *The Unaccountable*, p. 112. See also Nandor Fodor, 'The Poltergeist—Psychoanalysed,' *Psychiatric Quarterly* XII (1948), pp. 195-203 for Fodor's initial account of this concept as depicted in the form of a case study.

⁵⁶¹ Fodor, *The Haunted Mind*, p. 71.

possible to produce them outside the body as well. In this sense, parapsychological phenomena were identified as symptoms of the sufferer.⁵⁶²

While Fodor did not rule out the possibility of psychokinesis as an associated phenomenon, he nonetheless observed that ‘psychoanalytic inquiry may disclose motives of revenge, spite, or self-castigation behind the phenomena, all of which raise the question: Are we facing in the poltergeist a psychosomatic dissociation, a mental split conjoined with an abnormal employment of extra-physical organismic energies?’⁵⁶³ Fodor’s most famous (and controversial) investigation into ‘poltergeist psychosis’ took place in the context of his report into the Thornton Health case alluded to earlier.⁵⁶⁴ As we have seen, it was this case that brought Fodor’s work to Freud’s attention, in the form of a supportive letter in which the correctness of Fodor’s approach to psychoanalytic parapsychology was emphasised by Freud.

However, as Fodor subsequently observed, during the time when his correspondence with Freud originally took place, Fodor himself possessed no particular insight into the deeply personal significance that poltergeist phenomena originally held for Freud. Fodor subsequently wrote on this topic, focusing upon the deteriorating relations between Freud and Jung as exemplified by their respective reactions to an anomalous incident involving a bookcase that occurred on the 25th March, 1909, originally described by Freud as a ‘poltergeist phenomena,’ and subsequently by Fodor as a ‘telekinetic phenomenon’.⁵⁶⁵ Fodor trenchantly described the attempts made by Freud in his correspondence to Jung on the 16th April 1909 to downplay the impact that the incident had upon him as ‘pathetic’. He also

⁵⁶² Julia Gyimesi, ‘From Spooks to Symbol-Formation: Early Viennese Psychoanalysis and the Occult,’ in: Hans Gerald Hödl & Lukas Pokorny (eds.), *Religion in Austria Vol. 3* (Wein: Praesens Verlag, 2016), p. 50.

⁵⁶³ Fodor, *The Haunted Mind*, p. 72.

⁵⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 5-9 for a brief outline of this case.

⁵⁶⁵ Nandor Fodor, ‘Jung, Freud and a Newly-Discovered Letter of 1909 on the Poltergeist Theme,’ *The Psychoanalytic Review* 50B:2 (1963), pp. 119-128.

speculated on Jung's own conflicts arising from a possible desire to disguise from Freud the 'tainted heredity' associated with his maternal family's mediumistic propensities.⁵⁶⁶

While the controversy surrounding the Thornton Heath case initially disillusioned Fodor in his attempts to develop a 'psychoanalytic parapsychology,' he eventually arrived at the following position, which he maintained throughout the remainder of his career:⁵⁶⁷

Sifting out the real from the delusional, psychology will have to come to grips with unsuspected powers of the unconscious... The addition of the psychoanalytic method of approach promises a greater understanding of psychic manifestations than the exclusive utilization of objective methods of research, as used in parapsychology and psychical research. These disciplines must work hand-in-hand, lest the conquest of great mental realms be postponed to future generations.⁵⁶⁸

While Fodor's personal hopes in this regard were to remain as largely unrealised in his own lifetime, his vision of a 'psychoanalytic parapsychology' can nonetheless be construed a neglected contribution towards the development of an 'Orphic trajectory' within psychoanalysis. Moreover, some of his ideas concerning dreams and the nature of pre-natal existence are suggestive of a tacit and untimely apprehension of the numinous and infinite unconscious as postulated by Bionian and post-Bionian psychoanalysis, the salient features of which will be explored further in the next chapter and again in the conclusion. Keeping these perspectives in mind, it is to the seminal contributions made by W.R. Bion (1897-1979)

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁶⁷ Remarking on the impact of Freud's supporting correspondence previously alluded to, Fodor observed that 'This had the immediate effect of silencing my opponents and of confirming me in my decision to forsake parapsychology as a professional pursuit,' op. cit., p. 119.

⁵⁶⁸ Fodor, *The Haunted Mind*, p. 311.

towards the formation of an 'Orphic trajectory' within psychoanalysis that our attention shall now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE: FROM MYSTICAL *GNOSIS* TO ESOTERIC *TECHNĒ*

5.1. Introduction

I can understand someone saying that they had an experience like thought-reading ...

It might be compatible with the idea that there is some mental phenomenon which is not bounded by what I can see and what I can hear, what I can smell touch and feel.

Although you and I are in different places not known to each other there may ... be some overlapping. I could not prove it ... I suspect it is one of those things called ‘extrasensory perception,’ but that is probably too crude. As our intuition continues to develop we get nearer to a situation where we seem to be aware that the boundaries of our mind are not our physical boundaries, nor yet the boundaries which are imposed by our central nervous system. That is more like a guess, or a ‘hunch,’ than anything one could call evidence or fact. But it may be a fact one day.

W. R. Bion, 1974, Rio de Janeiro⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Chris Mawson (editor); Francesca Bion (consultant editor) *The Complete Works of W. R. Bion, Vols. I to XVI* (London: Karnac, 2014), Vol. 7, p. 90. For ease of reference, the *Complete Works* will subsequently be referred to as CWB followed by the volume (in Roman numerals) and the page number. For reasons of brevity, the Los Angeles seminars (which were published after CWB) under the auspices of Joseph Aguayo and Barnet Marin (eds.), *Wilfred Bion: Los Angeles Seminars and Supervision* (New York: Routledge, 2018) will subsequently be referenced as LASS. For comparison with the extract cited in the epigraph to this chapter, see CWB X: 24 (‘The Grid,’ 1971), where Bion writes: ‘I do not feel the need to postulate ‘extra-sensory’ perception’ immediately subsequent to having stated that ‘I think we need to keep an open mind’. By the time we get to *A Memoir of the Future* (1975) we encounter the following enigmatic addendum to these speculations: ‘Now, the Mind ... you just try it. Just attach it to your sensory perceptions! How do I know it won’t just turn into extrasensory perceptions-- s.p→e.s.p.?’ (CWB XII: 62). By 1976 we find Bion observing that ‘... we don’t know what the mind really is capable of perceiving’ (CWB X: 156). There are grounds to suppose that Bion’s speculations on ESP arose out of his experience of working with ‘projective identification’ in his clinical practice (CWB VII: 68; LASS, p. 100), in addition to discussions he had with clinicians in his seminars (CWB IX: 155-158). See also the following: ‘... one suspects that there is a relationship in analysis which extends beyond the analytic spectrum. It belongs, as it were, to the analytic ultraviolet, or the analytic infrared,’ (LASS, p. 97) [c.f. C. G. Jung, ‘On the nature of the psyche’ (1954/1969), *Collected Works Vol. 8*, para. 384, 414]. Notably, both Bion and Jung’s respective deployments of the idea of a psychic ‘spectrum’ bear comparison with Frederic Myers’ metaphoric usage of the electromagnetic spectrum as ‘one of the central organizing principles of his theorizing and poetics,’ (Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 60). See also Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology: The Dream of a Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 261, where he remarks that: ‘The

While W.R. Bion (1897-1979) did not make explicit use of the ideas of Sándor Ferenczi in his own writings, a case may nonetheless be made for construing important aspects of his later work in particular as constituting a *de facto* continuation and elaboration of the ‘Orphic trajectory’ initiated within psychoanalysis by Ferenczi and Severn as outlined in chapter four. In this respect, it is not without significance to observe that both of Bion’s analysts—John Rickman (1891-1951) and Melanie Klein (1882-1960)—were analysed by Ferenczi.⁵⁷⁰ An additional conduit of indirect influence may be discerned through Bion’s contact at the Tavistock with Ian Suttie (1898-1935), who was a personal friend of Ferenczi’s.⁵⁷¹ Whilst not advocating for the implementation of a ‘reductive’ hermeneutic whereby ideas of ‘influence’ are delimited to the identification of clearly delineated textual antecedents, it is nonetheless worth remarking on at this point that Bion himself was considered by some commentators to have been unduly reticent when it came to the matter of explicitly acknowledging the contributions made those authors whose ideas he tacitly drew upon during the course of developing his own innovations in psychoanalytic theory and practice.⁵⁷² This is a matter of some importance, given that in the estimation of the Symingtons, Bion is

closeness of Myers’ spectrum analogy to Jung’s suggests that if Jung did not draw it directly from Myers, it forms a striking example of cryptomnesia’. It is within the mesh of tensions conjoining these various positionings (separated as they appear to be from each other by a period of some eight years) that the arguments set out in this chapter are situated.

⁵⁷⁰ Notably, John Rickman and Elizabeth Severn were mutual acquaintances due to both parties being analysands of Ferenczi’s around the same period—see Peter L. Rudnytsky, *Mutual Analysis: Ferenczi, Severn, and the Origins of Trauma Theory* (Abington: Routledge, 2022), p. 110.

⁵⁷¹ R. D. Hinshelwood, ‘The Tavistock Years’ in: Nuno Torres and R. D. Hinshelwood, *Bion’s Sources: The shaping of his paradigms* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 45.

⁵⁷² See, for example, Joann Culbert-Koehn, ‘Between Bion and Jung: A Talk with James Grotstein,’ *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* 15: 4 (1997), p. 16, where Grotstein remarks that ‘Bion...was not a scholar who would cite other people’s works’. See also Franco Borgogno and Silvio Arrigo Merciai, ‘Searching for Bion: *Cogitations*, a new “Clinical Diary”’ in: Parthenope Bion Talamo et al (eds.) *W. R. Bion: Between Past and Future* (London: Karnac, 2000), p. 59. It is a matter of great regret that the untimely demise of Bion’s daughter Parthenope prevented her from bringing to fruition her envisaged project on ‘Bion and his Books—Pathways to the World of Bion,’ the brief surviving notes from which can be found in: Hinshelwood and Torres, ‘preface, in: Torres and Hinshelwood (eds.) *Bion’s Sources*, pp. xiv-xvii. For a useful (but far from exhaustive) summary of texts known to exist in Bion’s personal library, see Paulo Cesar Sandler, ‘The Origins of Bion’s Work,’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 87: 1 (2006).

adjudged to be ‘the deepest thinker within psychoanalysis—and this statement does not exclude Freud’.⁵⁷³ However, as we shall see subsequently, by the time of his later writings Bion had arrived at his own very particular understanding of the relations that pertain between a writer and the purported sources of their creativity.

It has been observed that Bion’s most innovative period as a theorist corresponded with his decision to move from London to California in 1968. One associated consequence that arose out of this move pertained to the vehemence with which some of the London Kleinians in particular began to question the value of Bion’s later writings, even going so far as to question the sanity of their author.⁵⁷⁴ While we do not know the precise reasons that led to this *caesura* in Bion’s life and work, there is nevertheless good reason to suppose that for some time prior to this, Bion had become increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of professional freedom he experienced in England in the context of his work as a leading Kleinian analyst.⁵⁷⁵ In a manner of speaking, he became (for some of his previous colleagues at least) the ‘repository ... of a heretic and subversive legacy that was unconsciously passed on to him at the Tavistock’.⁵⁷⁶ The intensity of the feelings engendered by these disputes concerning the putative value that should be ascribed to Bion’s work during his later, so-called ‘mystical’ phase, have proven sufficiently powerful as to continue to reverberate amidst the ongoing reception of his writings.⁵⁷⁷ It was in the light of such recurrent tensions that James Grotstein (Bion’s analysand and latterly one of the most sophisticated and

⁵⁷³ Joan and Neville Symington, *The Clinical Thinking of Wilfred Bion* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. xii.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁷⁵ Rudi Vermote, *Reading Bion* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 12–13. See also Nicola Abel-Hirsch, *Bion 365 Quotes* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 406–411 for more on this topic.

⁵⁷⁶ Mario Manica, ‘Memoir of the Future and memoir of the numinous,’ in: Giuseppe Civitarese (ed.) *Bion and Contemporary Psychoanalysis: Reading A Memoir of the Future* (New York: Routledge, 2018), p. 66.

⁵⁷⁷ James Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness: Wilfred Bion’s Legacy to Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2007), pp. 20–21. For an outline of recent controversies, see Rachel B. Blass, ‘Introduction to “on the Value of ‘Late Bion’ to Analytic Theory and Practice,”’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 92: 5 (2011) 1081–1088.

influential advocates for the value of his analyst's later 'mystical' writings) was to argue as early as 1981 that:

Bion has made a significant contribution to psychoanalysis by postulating that contemporary psychoanalytic theory still corresponded to Euclidian geometry insofar as it was limited to three dimensions of the senses. Geometry was liberated into its ultrasensual domain with the Cartesian coordinates and the development of algebraic geometry. The psychoanalytic equivalent of this would be the development of intuition—that ultrasensual capacity to experience in domains beyond the reach of our tangible knowledge. The human being is still not caught up with being a sufficient 'receiver' to the incredible 'sender' he/she and other human beings are. Bion's views in this regard are connected to his conceptions of psychic space ... relationships can exist in dimensions greater than three.⁵⁷⁸

There is much in Grotstein's elegant (and enigmatic) summation of his analyst's work that requires unpacking, some of the contextual details to which will need to wait until the concluding part of this chapter, in which the psychoanalytic ideas of Ignacio Matte-Blanco (1908-1995) are briefly discussed as constituting a useful comparative—and arguably complementary—perspective on the transformations in Bion's thinking that led him to propose that: 'The differentiating factor that I wish to introduce is not between conscious and unconscious, but between finite and infinite' (CWB IV: 167). The implications arising from this distinction are explored further below.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ James Grotstein, 'Wilfred R. Bion: the Man, the Psychoanalyst, the Mystic. A Perspective on His Life and Work' in: James S. Grotstein (ed.) *Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? A Memorial to W. R. Bion* (London: Karnac, 1981), pp. 23-24

⁵⁷⁹ C.f. the following: 'The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something infinite or not?', C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* [A. Jaffé, Ed.] (London: Fontana, 1995 [1963]), p. 357.

G rard Bl andonu has proposed that Bion’s writings can be thought of as inhabiting a number of phases, the respective features of which he delineated under the following series of rubrics: the group period; understanding psychosis; the epistemological period—the ideal of a scientific psychoanalysis; the epistemological period—the quest for ultimate truth; the final period.⁵⁸⁰ The initial part of this chapter sets out to provide an overview of the evidence that might be adduced for proposing the presence of an *esoteric matrix* active within the latter phases of Bion’s work, the effects of which it is argued were to make a significant contribution to the accompanying theoretical innovations arising out of the later ‘mystical’ (or ‘Orphic’) phase of his work.⁵⁸¹ However, in order to set out the wider context to these developments, it will be useful to begin with an overview of the oblique yet pervasive influence that the ideas of C. G. Jung (1875-1961) were to play in the development of Bion’s later thinking.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ G rard Bl andonu, *Wilfred Bion: his Life and Works 1897-1979* (London: Free Association Books, 1994).

⁵⁸¹ My use of the term *matrix* in this context echoes that of Bion’s concept of the *protomental matrix* (CWB IV; 177), in addition to that of the *hallucinatory matrix* accessed during states of deep regression (Vermote, 2019, p. 63). Notably, Matte-Blanco has made reference in his own writings to a ‘basic matrix ... in which symmetrisation exerts a major influence on representation and is in the region of the deeper unconscious ... The result is that when we begin to explore this stratum and think that something belongs to what we call the inside, but find that it may equally correctly be said to belong to what we call the outside, we tend to solve this difficulty by saying that this is something that has been projected outwards,’ Ignacio Matte-Blanco, *Thinking, Feeling and Being: Clinical reflections on the fundamental antinomy of human beings and the world* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 193-194. It is striking that both of these conceptualisations of ‘matrices’ bear comparison with Jung’s idea of the *psychoid*, at least to the extent that their shared convergence tending towards a dual aspect monism indirectly draws upon Bergson’s *panpsychism* as a common resource—see Anne Addison, ‘Jung’s Psychoid Concept and Bion’s Protomental Concept: A Comparison,’ *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 61: 5 (2016), p. 574; Ignacio Matte-Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets: An essay in Bi-Logic* (London: Karnac, 1998), p. 199, p. 271n.1, p. 331 n.1. For a useful account of Bion’s indebtedness to Bergson, see Torres, ‘Intuition and ultimate reality in psychoanalysis: Bion’s implicit use of Bergson and Whitehead’s notions’ in Torres and Hinshelwood (eds.) *Bion’s Sources*, pp. 20-34. For a reading of both Bion and Bergson as tending towards a position of panpsychism, see Torres, ‘The proto-mental and panpsychism’ in *ibid.*, pp. 56-67. While my argument is not extended in the present context to include ‘Eastern’ sources, it should not be inferred from this that such elements do not have a significant role to play in Bion’s later writings. For an exemplary instance of recent work in this area, see Yichi Zhang, ‘Wilfred Bion’s Annotations in *The Way of Zen*: An Investigation into his Practical Encounters with Buddhist Ideas,’ *Psychoanalysis and History* 21: 3 (2019), pp. 331-355.

⁵⁸² For a helpful summary of the extensive role played by esotericism in Jung’s work, see Gerhard Wehr, ‘C. G. Jung and Jungianism,’ in: Magee (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism*, pp. 297-307.

Having delineated the Jungian contribution towards the formation of a specifically Bionian understanding of an ‘infinite’ unconscious, the chapter moves on to engage with a series of esoterically inflected ideas and practices (*technē/technai*) prominent in Bion’s later writings, whose provenance owes much to esoteric modes of discourse and thinking (‘mysticism’; ‘Neoplatonism’; ‘O’⁵⁸³; ‘without memory or desire’; ‘a beam of intense darkness’; ‘reverie’). In conjunction with these esoteric *technai*, consideration will also be given to the role of the Jewish Kabbalah as a ‘framework’ for Bionian psychoanalysis. Moreover, it is proposed that Bion’s development of a *de facto* ‘quantum metapsychology’ is of a piece with his deployment of an interlocking series of esoteric *technai* that constitute an integral component to his later writings on technique.⁵⁸⁴ Furthermore, the replacement by quantum theory of an outmoded classical world view (within which ‘classical’ psychoanalysis was itself in many respects embedded), ‘described a reality which literally could not be pictured in the mind ... for the first time in history, science had produced a model of the universe which was beyond our ability to comprehend’.⁵⁸⁵ As we shall see, Bion’s re-visioning of a psychoanalysis transposed into a quantum universe will require the deployment of a language of *apophasis* as

⁵⁸³ While the term ‘O’ as employed by Bion is one that has come to acquire an increasingly baroque penumbra of meanings as elaborated within the secondary literature, perhaps its most lucid and lapidary exposition is the one given by Bion himself in his 1973 São Paulo seminars: ‘When I use the letter, O, I mean it to indicate noumenon, the thing itself of which nobody can know anything’ (CWB VII: 69).

⁵⁸⁴ See Robert W. Godwin, ‘Wilfred Bion and David Bohm: Towards a Quantum Metapsychology,’ *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* 14: 4 (1991). On the appropriation of quantum theory within a ‘New Age’ paradigm, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany: SUNY, 1998), pp. 62-70.

⁵⁸⁵ Godwin, ‘Wilfred Bion and David Bohm,’ pp. 627-628. Notably, Godwin, adduces parallels between Bion’s ‘O’ and Bohm’s concept of an ‘implicate’ order that underlies, transcends and enfolds the ‘explicate’ orders of perceptual reality—‘Both Bion and Bohm consider each moment to be a translation, or unfolding, of a primordial and multidimensional reality into the more familiar three-dimensions-plus-time modality,’ *ibid.*, p. 631. Compare this with the following: ‘Matte-Blanco privileges symmetry in a similar way that Bohm privileges unbroken wholeness; symmetrical relations are primary, and asymmetrical relations emerge from and come out of the infinity of symmetry,’ Karen Lombardi, ‘Whole and/or in bits: Bohm, Matte-Blanco, and (un)consciousness,’ *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 100: 3 (2019), p. 442.

a *technē* for engaging with the ineffable modes of experiencing thereby encountered by analyst and analysand.

Once a specifically esoteric hermeneutic is applied to these texts, the synergistic interplay of theory and *praxis* thereby arrived at in Bion's late writings can be conceptualised as constituting an exemplary instance of how the *gnosis* derived from mysticism is engaged in a reciprocal interplay with the *technai* of esotericism:

Understanding esotericism leads us back to mysticism, as the fundamental theoretical groundwork for esoteric currents ... esotericism is virtually unintelligible without an appreciation for its roots in mystic *gnosis*. And it can be plausibly argued that *gnosis* leads to esoteric *technē* ... Thus we frequently find mystics of all types engaged in esoteric practices.⁵⁸⁶

This dynamic can conjointly be thought of as constituting an ouroboric, textually-mediated process that is itself the performative enactment of a 'visionary' quest for 'mystical' modes of self-transformation, the essential features of which Jeffrey Kripal has theorised under the rubric of *academic esotericism*.⁵⁸⁷

From a textual viewpoint, a particularly striking aspect of this interplay pertains to the linguistic and conceptual difficulties commonly experienced both by neophyte as well as by

⁵⁸⁶ 'Editor's Introduction' in: Magee (ed.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism*, p. xxxi.

⁵⁸⁷ On the topic of *academic esotericism*, see Jeffrey J. Kripal *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), p. 25.

more experienced readers during the course of their encounter with Bion's *oeuvre*.⁵⁸⁸ Bion was aware of these difficulties and sought on occasion to address some of the concerns raised by his critics:

It may seem that I am mis-using words with an established meaning, as in my use of the terms 'function' and 'factors'. A critic has pointed out to me that the terms are used ambiguously and the sophisticated reader may be misled by the association of both words with mathematics and philosophy. I have deliberately used them because of the association, and I wish the ambiguity to remain. I want the reader to be reminded of mathematics, philosophy and common usage, because a characteristic of the human mind I am discussing may develop in such a way that it is seen at a later stage to be classifiable under those headings—and others (CWB IV: 264.)

At the literal level, the reader has to contend with a series of increasingly complex, opaque and recondite texts, whose range of reference not only spans the more usual topics commonly encountered in psychoanalytic theory, but whose purview is further extended so as to include subjects as disparate and diverse as astronomy, quantum theory, higher mathematics, ancient history, mysticism, ideographs and hieroglyphs, the *sui generis* construct known as 'the grid,' not to mention detours into some of the more obscure byways of philosophical speculation. Moreover, Bion's own attitude towards the communicative possibilities of language undergoes a series of complex transformations over time during the course of which his preferred mode of discourse shifts from the neo-positivistic towards a *bricolage* of the

⁵⁸⁸ The standard dictionaries are: Rafael E. Lopez-Corvo, *The Dictionary of the Work of W. R. Bion* (New York: Routledge, 2018 [2003]); P. C. Sandler, *The Language of Bion: A Dictionary of Concepts* (London: Karnac, 2005). Both of these works have been extensively consulted in the following pages.

literary, the apophatic and the mystical. See, for example, the following extract, which is taken from his *magnum opus*, *A Memoir of the Future* (1975):⁵⁸⁹

BION If you think the problems that we have to solve can be solved in a framework where 'things' happen in time and space, with ideas taken from the vocabulary and grammar invented for the senses, we shall fail ... You cannot resolve the apparent conflict of wave mechanics with the theories of quanta without supposing a domain suitable for harbouring the theory which has to be entertained. This theory has been formulated by Melanie Klein as operative in a psychoanalytic domain expanded to contain it. It is analogous to expanding the domain of arithmetic to contain irrational numbers, negative numbers, compound conjugate numbers. The domain which is adequate for the operation of natural numbers cannot contain these numbers (CWB XII: 174-175.)

As the textual recipients of such a conceptual and terminological barrage of psychoanalytic, quantum mechanical and mathematical discourses, it comes as something of a relief for the reader to find the character of Rosemary (with whose responses the overwhelmed reader is likely to identify) reply to the character Bion's speculations with a simple 'I don't understand' (the state of 'unknowing' itself constituting the necessary precondition for attaining the state of *apophasis* advocated as an integral element of the late Bion's epistemological *technē*). Moreover, as we shall see later in this chapter, in addition to the very considerable terminological and conceptual difficulties just adumbrated, we may find that in texts such as 'The Mystic and the Group' and 'Container and Contained' (*Attention*

⁵⁸⁹ At least it was deemed to be such by Francesca Bion (Lopez-Corvo, 2018, p. 14 and p. 173) as well as by Bion himself—see Vermote, *Reading Bion*, p. 11. On the rather more mixed reception this text received from its first readers, see *ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

and Interpretation [1970], chapters six and seven) there are reasons to suppose that, as a consequence of the difficulties arising out of previous encounters with his colleagues in London, Bion may have additionally embarked upon a mode of discourse known as *defensive esotericism* as a rhetorical stratagem enabling him both to give covert expression to his views whilst simultaneously mitigating against the efforts made by the psychoanalytic ‘establishment’ to undermine the wider dissemination of some of his more provocative and heterodox ideas.⁵⁹⁰

5.2. The spectral *encryption* of Jung in the late writings of Bion

Any attempt to argue that Bion might in some sense have drawn upon the ideas of Jung during the course of arriving at his own conceptualisations may appear at first sight to be misguided. In his correspondence with John Rickman, Bion was disparaging not only regarding Jung’s idea of a ‘collective unconscious,’ but was even more dismissive when it came to the matter of Jungian scholarship more generally.⁵⁹¹ Yet despite this seemingly

⁵⁹⁰ For more on the idea of *defensive esotericism*, see Arthur M. Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 90-91. While Melzer’s argument requires the book-length exposition that he devotes to these topics (defensive, protective, pedagogical and political esotericism), the central tenets of his work can nonetheless be aptly summarised in the words of the Abbé Galiani (1728-1787) to a friend: ‘You tell me ... that after the reading of my book, you are hardly any further along concerning the heart of the question. How, by the devil! ... do you not read the white [spaces] of works? Certainly, those who read only the black of a writing will not have seen anything decisive in my book; but you, *read the white, read what I did not write and what is there nonetheless; and then you will find it,*’ (cited in Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines*, p. 287). In view of Bion’s proclivity to deploy paradoxical metaphors to encode his meaning (as might be seen, for example, in his recurrent references to the ostensibly Freudian metaphor of ‘a beam of intense darkness’ explored later in this chapter), the adoption of this advice as given by Galiani to his interlocutor might conceivably constitute a ‘model’ approach for reading the later Bion in particular. Notably in this regard, Grotstein has queried ‘... *may not Bion have learned early on to think and speak in code like his forebear, Spinoza?*’ (Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 14), a figure who Melzer notably cites in his work as belonging to his genealogy of ‘esoteric’ philosophers. As we shall see subsequently in the conclusion, Grotstein, too, may have employed a similar stratagem.

⁵⁹¹ See Dimitris Vonofakos and Bob Hinshelwood, ‘Wilfred Bion’s Letters to John Rickman (1939-1951),’ *Psychoanalysis and History* 14: 1 (2012), pp. 67-68 [30/01/1940—but see note 9, 15/03/1940]. Perhaps

unpromising start, various arguments have been put forward by a range of scholars in support of the contention that a number of Bion's concepts are either to some degree indebted to Jungian ideas (whether directly, indirectly, or via more obscure processes such as cryptomnesia); or at least bear some similarity to their proximate Jungian analogues. The range of comparable ideas is considerable, and includes the following (not exhaustive) list of concepts: projective identification and container/contained⁵⁹²; analytic 'intuition'⁵⁹³; reversible perspective (synchronicity)⁵⁹⁴; the protomental matrix (psychoid)⁵⁹⁵; primordial mind (archetypes); gnostic mysticism; Preconceptions (archetypes)⁵⁹⁶; myths; transformations; the numinous⁵⁹⁷; 'O'⁵⁹⁸; reverie (amplification); constant conjunction (synchronicity)⁵⁹⁹; *A Memoir of the Future (Liber Novus)*.⁶⁰⁰ Yet despite these confluences, on the few occasions when Bion explicitly discusses Jung's work, his acknowledgement of any parallels or potential influences tends to be somewhat ambivalent or 'minimalist' in

somewhat ironically, Bion's reference to the work of James Frazer in the first of these letters might suggest that he too was out of touch with more recent developments in anthropology.

⁵⁹² Christian Maier, 'Bion and C. G. Jung. How did the container-contained model find its thinker? The fate of a cryptomnesia,' *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 61: 2 (2016), pp. 134-154. Jung made reference to 'the problem of the container and the contained' in his paper 'Marriage as a psychological relationship' (1925 [English trans. 1931]). Notably, on p. 144 of his paper, Maier identifies 'a chain of authors of projective identification—Weiss, Jung, Rosenfeld, Melanie Klein, Bion ...' thereby complicating, in a fruitful fashion, the conceptual lineage of this ostensibly 'Kleinian' idea.

⁵⁹³ Sherly Williams, 'Analytic Intuition: A Meeting Place for Jung and Bion,' *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 23: 1 (2006), pp. 83-98.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵⁹⁵ Ann Addison, *Jung's Psychoid Concept Contextualised* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 52-68.

⁵⁹⁶ Mark Winborn 'Bion and Jung: Intersecting vertices,' in: Robin S. Brown (ed.) *Re-Encountering Jung: Analytical Psychology and Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 85-111. For an account of more recent developments concerning the idea of a 'primordial mind,' in which a conceptual lineage conjoining Jung, Bion and Matte-Blanco is delineated, see Michael Robbins, *The Primordial Mind in Health and Illness: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 32-40.

⁵⁹⁷ Culbert-Koehn, 'Between Bion and Jung,' pp. 15-32.

⁵⁹⁸ Barbara Stevens Sullivan, *The Mystery of Analytical Work: Weavings from Jung and Bion* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁵⁹⁹ Mancia, 'Memoir of the Future and memoir of the numinous,' p. 66

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-77. However, c.f. with C. G. Jung, 'Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle'. In H. Read et al. (Eds.), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung: Vol. 8. The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 514, para. 963, where, in the context of an explanatory diagram, Jung describes synchronicity as constituting 'Inconstant Connection through Contingence, Equivalence, or "Meaning"'.

terms of its nature.⁶⁰¹ The only explicit acknowledgement of Jung's writings referenced in the *Collected Works* pertains to Jung's 1925 paper, 'Marriage as a psychological relationship' (CWB XVI: 10). Yet we also know that an annotated copy of Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1965) exists in Bion's library.⁶⁰² Furthermore, in the estimation of James Grotstein, the parallels that can be drawn between their respective ideas are 'uncanny,' to the extent whereby he deemed Bion to be a 'closet Jungian'. Grotstein concludes: 'It remains a mystery why Bion, who obviously appreciated Jung's thinking, never really acknowledged Jung'.⁶⁰³ However, it is worth remarking at this point that, for Bion, attempts to establish a proprietorial ownership of ideas was deemed by him to be a fundamentally misguided exercise.⁶⁰⁴ When questioned in a seminar regarding the parallels that might be adduced between his own ideas and those of Jung, Bion responded as follows:

The relationship of one idea to another is quite a difficult problem because ideas are not so clearly defined as words—and that is bad enough. For purposes of verbal communication you can do a lot with dictionary definitions and the rules of grammar, but when it comes to ideas themselves—the real thing, whatever that is—I think it is extremely optimistic to imagine that they also conform to the ways in which we think or even express our thoughts or ideas (CWB IX: 68.)

⁶⁰¹ For example, In *A Memoir of the Future*, Bion describes the 'postulate of a collective unconscious ... to be unnecessary' (CWB XIII: 188); yet, in *Four Discussions* (1976), he seems to be quite comfortable adducing parallels between his own ideas concerning a 'primordial mind' and 'Jung's archetypes' (CWB X: 62).

⁶⁰² Winborn, 'Bion and Jung,' p. 89. Chris Mawson (editor of CWB) has observed that although Bion occasionally criticised Jung's ideas publically, he 'also privately read his work with interest'—see Joseph Aguayo, 'The Early psychoanalytic work of James Grotstein (1966-1981): turning a Kleinian/Bionian tide away from American ego psychology,' in: Annie Reiner (ed.) *Of Things Invisible to Mortal Sight: Celebrating the Work of James S. Grotstein* (London: Karnac, 2017), p. 11.

⁶⁰³ James Grotstein, 'Foreword' in: Ann Casement and David Tacey (eds.) *The Idea of the Numinous: Contemporary Jungian and Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. xiii.

⁶⁰⁴ 'I think that with Freud, Stekel and Jung there was an attempt to apportion out the areas that would be occupied by those three particular forces, but I can't say that I find the struggle for possession of some particular sphere at all enthralling,' (CWB IX: 69 [The Tavistock Seminars, Seminar 6, 5th July 1978]).

In order to illustrate more fully the complexities that can arise when attempting to unravel the labyrinthine pathways conjoining Jung's ideas to those of Bion, it will be useful at this point to refer to the only face-to-face encounter between Jung and Bion known to have occurred. This took place in 1935 when Bion (who, for the third lecture, was accompanied by his patient, the writer Samuel Beckett) attended three out of a series of five lectures given by Jung at the Tavistock Clinic between the 30th September and the 4th October. Christian Maier has put forward a cogent case for surmising that Bion's recollection of the content of Jung's Tavistock lectures may have been subject to a process of cryptomnesia, resulting in a state of affairs whereby the ideas of one's predecessors are initially 'forgotten,' only to reappear as one's own 'discovery' at a later date.⁶⁰⁵ Bion devised his own theory with its associated nomenclature for such episodes of 'forgetfulness,' to which he assigned the rubric of 'wild thoughts':

If a thought without a thinker comes along, it may be what is a 'stray thought,' or it could be a thought with the owner's name and address upon it, or it could be a 'wild thought'... What I am concerned with at the moment is the wild thoughts that turn up and for which there is no possibility of being able to trace immediately any kind of ownership, or even any sort of way of being aware of the genealogy of that particular thought (CWB X: 175.)

Regardless of what we might choose to adduce from such lapses in recall, Grotstein concluded that Bion's attendance at Jung's Tavistock lectures had a 'dramatic impact' upon him.⁶⁰⁶ Moreover, as the first ever psychoanalytic training candidate to resist pressure to

⁶⁰⁵ As Maier astutely observes, 'cryptomnesias occur in psychoanalysis with remarkable frequency,' 'Bion and C. G. Jung,' 2016, p. 144. The following account of Jung's Tavistock lectures is heavily indebted to Maier's paper, although I've additionally drawn upon details provided by Vermote, *Reading Bion*, pp. 66-67.

⁶⁰⁶ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 135.

discontinue working at the Tavistock during his candidature, Bion would have had ample opportunity to encounter the ideas of Jung within the eclectic milieu promoted by the Tavistock.⁶⁰⁷

During the discussion at the end of the second lecture, Bion questioned Jung concerning the relations between mind and brain, with Jung responding at length to Bion's queries. As we shall see, ensuing attempts to arrive at an ever more adequate articulation of this central problem was to constitute a recurrent feature of Bion's *oeuvre*. Maier has highlighted the importance of the themes adumbrated by Jung in lectures II and V of the Tavistock series for Bion's future work, noting how Jung's approach to transferential and projective phenomena as outlined in lecture II bears comparison with Bion's later ideas concerning a 'communicative' form of projective identification, the dynamics of which entail a process of psychic 'contagion'. Furthermore, in his fifth and final lecture, Jung elaborates a theory of psychic 'containment,' the features of which bear comparison with Bion's later development of the concept of container/contained.⁶⁰⁸ Moreover, Jung's account of a little girl who 'had never been born entirely' resonated sufficiently with Bion (and even more so, with his guest, Samuel Beckett, for whom this remark of Jung's became a recurrent motif throughout his later writings) as to make a reappearance in his inaugural psychoanalytic paper, 'The Imaginary Twin' (1950) under the guise of 'not-being-born'.⁶⁰⁹

As Andrew Samuels has remarked, 'Many of the central issues and features of contemporary psychoanalysis are reminiscent of positions taken by Jung in earlier years'—a contention that can easily be supported via the notable increase of interest arising in the status of the 'psycho-

⁶⁰⁷ Op. cit., pp. 138-139. For more on this topic, see Hinshelwood, 'The Tavistock Years,' pp. 44-55.

⁶⁰⁸ Maier, 'Bion and C. G. Jung,' pp. 135-138. See also Lopez-Corvo, *Dictionary* pp. 70-72 for a helpful summary of the container—contained concept in Bion.

⁶⁰⁹ Maier, 'Bion and C. G. Jung,' pp. 139-142. See also Vermote, *Reading Bion*, p. 66-69.

spiritual' within psychoanalysis, in addition to a resurgence of interest in the idea of a 'creative' or 'generative' unconscious.⁶¹⁰ Consequently, in the light of the theoretical convergence that has more recently become prominent across the Jungian and psychoanalytic conceptualisations of the unconscious, the role played by Bion's later writings can be viewed as having provided a significant conduit for the covert dissemination of Jungian ideas across the wider field of contemporary psychoanalytic theorising more generally.⁶¹¹

5.3. Mystical *gnosis* and esoteric *technē* in the late writings of Bion

It has been proposed that Bion's approach to the phenomenon of 'mysticism' in his later writings constitutes 'a psychoanalytic model of mysticism, not a mystical model of psychoanalysis'.⁶¹² Moreover, Bion himself explicitly denied having any first-hand experience of this phenomenon, stating that his own 'knowledge of mysticism is through hearsay' (CWB VII: 68). However, while it could be inferred from such remarks that Bion's own outlook on mysticism was essentially *etic* in terms of its orientation and instrumental as regards to its nature, some commentators have sought to contest such a 'reductive' reading of his involvement with this phenomenon.⁶¹³ I would like to propose that there are grounds to suppose that Bion's knowledge of mysticism not only extended into the realm of the *emic*, but that he developed within the main body of his later work in particular a series of psychoanalytically-grounded, esoteric *technai* ('a beam of intense darkness'; 'without

⁶¹⁰ Cited in Winborn, 'Bion and Jung,' p. 86.

⁶¹¹ See Robin S. Brown (ed.), *Re-Encountering Jung: Analytical Psychology and Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2018) for more on this.

⁶¹² Robert Caper, 'Review of: *The Clinical Thinking of Wilfred Bion*, Symington, J., Symington, N. (1996),' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 79 (1998), p. 420.

⁶¹³ 'Bion uses many images and expressions from religious and mystical life to portray psychoanalytic processes. But he does more. He filters mysticism through psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis through mysticism,' Michael Eigen, *The Psychoanalytic Mystic* (London: Free Association Press, 1998), p. 16.

memory or desire'; 'O' 'reverie'), the practice of which effectively served to facilitate alterations in consciousness within both analyst and analysand in a manner analogous to the attainment of 'mystical' states as depicted in the emic literature. Moreover, he avowedly drew upon the traditions embodied in the Jewish Kabbalah to provide a 'framework' for psychoanalysis. James Grotstein has outlined the idea of a 'psychoanalytic mystic' in the following terms:

What is a psychoanalytic mystic? It is one who eschews the known cant of a body of knowledge, *turned dogma*—along with its three-dimensional, linear outlook (i.e., transference, resistance, psychic apparatus, etc.)—for a mystical outlook, one that deals with emptiness, contemplation, infinity, chaos, unpredictability, spirituality, and immanence.⁶¹⁴

Whilst the adoption of such terms within psychoanalysis may at first sight appear to entail a radical reorientation of traditional psychoanalytic assumptions, their deployment in this context can perhaps be more accurately understood as an act of historical retrieval.⁶¹⁵

Moreover, there are grounds to suppose that Bion's re-visioning of the ultimate aim of psychoanalysis as constituting a state of achieving 'at-one-ment' with 'O' means that attempts to perpetuate a clear distinction between a 'psychoanalytic model of mysticism' and 'a mystical model of psychoanalysis' exemplifies a form of demarcation that can no longer be

⁶¹⁴ James Grotstein, Foreword, in: Gerald J. Gargiulo, *Psyche, Self and Soul* (London: Whurr Pub., 2004), p. xi. For a more extensive elaboration of the idea of a 'psychoanalytic mysticism' articulated within a Bionian register, see Dan Merkur, *Explorations of the Psychoanalytic Mystics* (New York: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 227-256 and Eigen, *The Psychoanalytic Mystic*, pp. 81-94.

⁶¹⁵ '... impressive analogues... exist between traditional Christian mystical phenomena and the research findings of early French psychiatry and Freud's psychoanalysis on psychosis, hysteria, and other altered states of consciousness,' Kripal, *Roads of Excess*, p. 10.

meaningfully sustained, at least within a specifically Bionian understanding of their mutual interdependency for achieving a state of ‘at-one-ment’ with O:

O stands for the absolute truth in and of any object; it is assumed that this cannot be known by any human being; it can be known about, its presence can be recognized and felt, but it cannot be known. It is possible to be one with it ... No psychoanalytic discovery is possible without recognition of its existence, at-one-ment with it and evolution. The religious mystics have probably approximated most closely to expression of experience of it (CWB VI: 245.)⁶¹⁶

In the estimation of Grotstein, ‘the concept of O transforms all existing psychoanalytic theories ... into veritable psychoanalytic manic defences against the unknown ...’⁶¹⁷ The perspective on psychoanalysis thereby arrived at is congruent with an idea of psychoanalysis more generally as providing ‘a contemporary site for *apophasis*’.⁶¹⁸ In the case of Bion, this can be evidenced most clearly through his repeated references to a particular extract taken from the correspondence between Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé—the details of which are explored further below—in addition to his adoption of the writings of John of the Cross (1542-1591) as a resource in his later work. Bion’s covert deployment of additional ‘mystical’ and ‘esoteric’ sources will be further illustrated with reference to his use of the Kabbalah in psychoanalysis. This comparative contextualisation provides the hermeneutic framework for a reading of the literary effects of *apophasis*, whose out-workings can be partially attributed to a performative ‘meaning event,’ in which the language of *apophasis* is

⁶¹⁶ For a useful selection of recent essays on this topic, see Afsaneh K. Alisobhani and Glenda J. Corstorphine (eds.) *Explorations in Bion’s ‘O’ Everything We Know Nothing About* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

⁶¹⁷ Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 121.

⁶¹⁸ David Henderson, ‘*Apophasis* and Psychoanalysis’ in: Thomas Cattoi and David M. Odorisio (eds.) *Depth Psychology and Mysticism* (London: Palgrave, 2018), p. 200.

enacted in order to evoke within the other a state of mind ‘structurally analogous to the event of mystical union’.⁶¹⁹ However, before embarking upon a more detailed account of how these processes are enacted in Bion’s writings, it will be useful to begin with a brief definition of the term ‘mysticism,’ following which we will be in a better position to explore the manner in which terms such as esotericism, mysticism, *apophasis* and *gnosis vis-à-vis technē* are conceptually implied and obliquely imbricated in Bion’s later writings. With respect to the concept of ‘mysticism’ as it is understood within the contemporary academy, Kripal has outlined that:

Mysticism is a modern comparative category that has been used in a wide variety of ways to locate, describe, and evaluate individuals’ experiences of communion, union, or identity with the sacred ... [it entails] a radical relationship to language expressed through forms of poetic and philosophic writing that subvert or deconstruct the grammatical stabilities and metaphysical substances of normative doctrine and practice; the attainment of supernormal or psychic powers ... the ritual transformation of consciousness, visionary phenomena ...⁶²⁰

By way of contrast, Bion’s own deployment of the rubric of ‘mysticism’ is notably more idiosyncratic in terms of its expression and is explicitly moulded to suit the presenting needs of its author:

The ‘exceptional individual’ may be variously described as a genius, a messiah, a mystic ... For convenience, I shall use the term ‘mystic’ to describe these exceptional

⁶¹⁹ Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 10.

⁶²⁰ Jeffrey J. Kripal, ‘Mysticism’ in: Robert A. Segal (ed.) *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2008b), p. 321.

individuals. I include scientists, and Newton is the outstanding example of such a man; his mystical and religious preoccupations have been dismissed as an aberration when they should be considered as the matrix from which his mathematical formulations evolved (CWB VI: 274-275.)

Faced with the multivalent perspectives arising out of such conceptual fluidities, it is perhaps not surprising to find at least one contemporary psychoanalytic theorist strategically sidestepping such definitional questions by deploying a heuristic approach—already tending towards the apophatic—wherein gestures made towards the definitional are deconstructed in the very act of their formation:

I have not defined mystical feeling because I am unable to. My hope is, if I speak around it, or from it, well enough, something of value will get communicated to the reader and myself. Discussions of mystical awareness tend to undo themselves because of the paradoxical nature of the experiencing involved.⁶²¹

Bion's development of the technical terminology of O, F (faith) and K (knowledge) is indebted to a wide range of philosophical, literary, theological and mystical sources (not all of which are explicitly acknowledged by him in his writings), including Plato, the Neoplatonists, Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross and Immanuel Kant.⁶²² One commentator has gone so far as to assert that 'Wilfred R. Bion ... was a Neoplatonist ... His knowledge of

⁶²¹ Eigen, *The Psychoanalytic Mystic*, p. 31.

⁶²² Robert S. White, 'Bion and Mysticism: The Western Tradition,' *American Imago* 68: 2 (2011), p. 213; Judith Pickering, *The Search for Meaning in Psychotherapy: Spiritual Practice, the Apophatic Way and Bion* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 180 ff. According to White, while Bion does not make any explicit allusion to Plotinus in his writings (and only some brief, incidental reference to Proclus), Neoplatonic influences are nonetheless clearly discernible within the main body of his work—see White, 'Bion and Mysticism,' pp. 225-226.

Neoplatonism was not casual'.⁶²³ Whilst such a viewpoint may at first glance appear to be somewhat contentious, it is nonetheless one that is congruent with a close reading of his later texts in particular. For example, when situated within an explicitly Neoplatonic frame of reference, beta elements become 'mental representations of Platonic forms that a psychotic possesses but does not comprehend'.⁶²⁴ Moreover, whilst mystical experience is understood by Bion to constitute a form of 'regression,' this latter term—if interpreted Neoplatonically—comes to denote 'an *epistrophe*, a "reversion" of the decline of the one into the many through an ascension of the many to the one'.⁶²⁵ Such a perspectival shift requires a revolutionary re-conceptualisation of psychoanalysis as entailing 'a pursuit of mystical experience on the part of both analyst and patient. By means of reverie and alpha-function, the analyst achieves transformations in O for himself, and facilitates a parallel transformation in the patient'.⁶²⁶ The implications arising from these developments for the future of psychoanalysis have been described by Merkur in the following terms:

Psychoanalytic mystics have repeatedly detected evidence of the existence of a higher mental function, or group of functions, that have escaped conventional ways of thinking about the unconscious. The topic awaits further research.⁶²⁷

As we saw in chapter three, during the fin de siècle research into such 'higher' functions was already underway, as can be evidenced from the writings of theorists such as William James (1842-1910), Théodore Flournoy (1854-1920) and F.W.H. Myers (1843-1901). Whilst Bion made no explicit reference to these authors in his own publications, such parallels as might be

⁶²³ Merkur, *Explorations of the Psychoanalytic Mystics*, p. 227.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁶²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁶²⁶ Merkur, *Explorations of the Psychoanalytic Mystics*, p. 246.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

adduced regarding their convergent interest in exploring ‘a higher mental function’ may nonetheless suggest that there exists a very real sense in which Bion’s later writings set out to investigate equivalent psychical functions, albeit from within the ambit of a mystically-inflected psychoanalysis.⁶²⁸ However, in order to illustrate what such an investigation might have entailed, it will be necessary to begin with a brief overview of *apophasis* in the later writings of Bion.

While it is impossible in the present context to provide a detailed account of the role of *apophasis* in mysticism, a brief orientation to this highly complex topic might very briefly be outlined as follows.⁶²⁹ The term *apophatic* derives from the Greek *apophasis*, whose meaning can be deduced via a nexus of associated terms such as ‘unsaying’, ‘negation,’ but also ‘revelation’. It is contrasted with the ‘affirmative’ strands within the mystical traditions, both of which are deemed to be interdependent, insofar as one cannot ‘unsay’ except by means of ‘saying’.⁶³⁰ Although elements of apophasis existed earlier, it is generally accepted that the Western apophatic tradition began with Plotinus (204/5-270 C.E.) and attained its classic exposition in the sixth century C.E. in the ‘mystical theology’ of the Pseudo-Dionysius.⁶³¹ Its subsequent exemplars spanned the European, Jewish and Islamic cultures, and included

⁶²⁸ However, it is possible to speculate that James’ theory of consciousness could have played a tacit role in the formation of the famous Bionian dictum, concerning ‘Thoughts without a thinker’ (CWB VI: 202; CWB VIII: 283, 285, 326; CWB IX: 142 ff.): ‘*If the passing thought be the directly verifiable existent which no school has hitherto doubted it to be, then that thought is itself the thinker*, and psychology need not look beyond. The only pathway that I can discover for bringing in a more transcendental thinker would be to *deny* that we have any *direct* knowledge of the thought as such. The latter’s existence would then be reduced to a postulate, an assertion that there *must* be a knower correlative to all this *known*; and the problem *who that knower is* would have become a metaphysical problem. With the question once stated in these terms, the spiritualist and transcendentalist solutions must be considered as *prima facie* on a par with our own psychological one, and discussed impartially. But that carries us beyond the psychological or naturalistic point of view,’ William James, *The Principles of Psychology Volume 1* (New York: Dover Publications, 1950 [1890]), p. 401.

⁶²⁹ For a useful history of this topic, see Deidre Carabine, *The Unknown God—Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015).

⁶³⁰ Pickering, *The Search for Meaning in Psychotherapy*, p. 10.

⁶³¹ For an exemplary account of the approach to *apophasis* undertaken by the Pseudo-Dionysius, see David Henderson, *Apophatic Elements in the Theory and Practice of Psychoanalysis: Pseudo-Dionysius and C.G. Jung* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 11-43.

figures such as Ibn al-‘Arabi (1165-1240), Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), Isaac Luria (1534-1572), John of the Cross (1542-1591) and Jacob Böhme (1575-1624).⁶³² According to Michael Sells:

Classical Western apophasis shares three key features: (1) the metaphor of overflowing or “emanation” which is often in creative tension with the language of intentional, demiurgic creation; (2) dis-ontological discursive effort to avoid reifying the transcendent as an “entity” or “being” or “thing”; (3) a distinctive dialectic of transcendence and immanence in which the utterly transcendent is revealed as the utterly immanent.⁶³³

The underlying principles of apophatic language are not easily summarised, but can be briefly itemised under the following seven rubrics: the aporia of transcendence; a language of ephemeral, double propositions; a dialectic of transcendence and immanence; a dis-ontological and non-substantialist Deity; the use of metaphors of emanation, procession and return; semantic transformations; the meaning event. This latter rubric denotes the literary re-enactment of these prior principles in order to linguistically mirror ‘the fusion of self and other within mystical union’.⁶³⁴ Notably within the present context, Bion’s own use of language has been described as recalling ‘mystical unsaying in the way it exposes and overcomes subject-object dichotomies’.⁶³⁵ Hence we find in his late writings apophatic utterances such as the following:

⁶³² See Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, p. 5.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶³⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 207-209.

⁶³⁵ Richard E. Webb and Michael A. Sells, ‘Lacan and Bion: Psychoanalysis and the Mystical Language of “Unsayings”’, *Theory and Psychology* 5:2 (1995), p. 208.

I shall use the sign O to denote that which is the ultimate reality represented by terms such as ultimate reality, absolute truth, the god-head, the infinite, the thing-in-itself. O does not fall in the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can be 'become,' but it cannot be 'known'. It is darkness and formlessness but it enters the domain K when it has evolved to a point where it can be known, through knowledge gained by experience: its existence is conjectured phenomenologically (CWB VI: 242.)

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Bion's initiation into to the way of apophasis appears to have arisen out of his acquaintance with the correspondence between Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé, in which we find Freud describing his deployment of a *de facto* apophatic *technē* transposed into a psychoanalytic register:

I know that in writing I have to blind myself artificially in order to focus all the light on one dark spot, renouncing cohesion, harmony, rhetoric and everything which you call symbolic, frightened as I am by the experience that any such claim or expectation involves the danger of distorting the matter under investigation, even though it may embellish it (Freud to Lou Andreas-Salomé, 25th May 1916.)⁶³⁶

This letter was not only referenced by Bion on a number of occasions throughout his own writings, but was even cited by Bion to Grotstein during the course of the latter's analysis (with Bion providing on one occasion an impromptu translation into English from his copy of the German edition of the correspondence).⁶³⁷ In *Attention and Interpretation* [1970] we find

⁶³⁶ Ernst Pfeiffer (ed.) *Sigmund Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé: Letters* [trans. William and Elaine Robson-Scott] (London: The Hogarth Press, 1972), p. 45.

⁶³⁷ According to Grotstein, Bion's idiosyncratic translation of this passage (which he took notes on immediately thereafter) was as follows: 'When conducting an analysis, one must cast a *beam of intense darkness* so that

the following allusion to this apophatic *technē*, the practice of which is closely associated by Bion with the abandonment of memory and desire:

Freud, in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salome, suggested his method of achieving a state of mind which would give advantages that would compensate for obscurity when the object investigated was particularly obscure. He speaks of blinding himself artificially. As a method of achieving this artificial blinding I have indicated the importance of eschewing memory and desire. Continuing and extending this process, I include understanding and sense perception with the properties to be eschewed ... the psychoanalyst is seeking something that differs from what is normally known as reality ... for the purpose of achieving contact with psychic reality, namely, the evolved characteristics of O' (CWB VI: 257.)⁶³⁸

There are grounds for surmising that this letter from Freud to Lou Andreas-Salomé constituted an *ur-text* for Bion, the key tenets of which were to provide a recurrent object for meditation that in its turn inspired ongoing theoretic elaboration throughout the course of Bion's later writings. Having made explicit reference to this text, Bion extemporised on its contents in the following terms during the course of his 1973 São Paulo lectures:

Instead of trying to bring a brilliant, intelligent, knowledgeable light to bear on obscure problems, I suggest we bring to bear a diminution of the 'light'—a

something which has hitherto been obscured by the glare of the illumination can glitter all the more in the darkness,' cited in: Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 1.

⁶³⁸ C.f. the following: 'So clear is it of intelligible forms, which are the adequate objects of understanding, that the understanding is not conscious of its presence. Sometimes, indeed—when it is most pure—it creates darkness, because it withdraws the understanding from its accustomed lights, forms, and fantasies, and then the darkness becomes palpable and visible,' St John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* trans. By David Lewis (London: Thomas Baker, 1922), p. 127.

penetrating beam of darkness: a reciprocal of the searchlight. The peculiarity of this penetrating ray is that it would be directed towards the object of our curiosity, and this object would absorb whatever light already existed, leaving the area of examination exhausted of any light that it possessed. The darkness would be so absolute that it would achieve a luminous, absolute vacuum. So that, if any object existed, however faint, it would show up very clearly. Thus, a very faint light would become visible in maximum conditions of darkness (CWB VII: 25.)⁶³⁹

While Judith Pickering has argued that Freud's letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé explicitly 'places Freud in the tradition of Dionysius,' she otherwise acknowledges that Freud 'did not apply such a principle to a spiritual end'.⁶⁴⁰ The same caveat could not be applied to Bion, however. In Pickering's estimation, Bion's ostensible indebtedness to Freud as the source for this metaphoric 'paradox' constituted a 'diversion' to distract attention from his underlying 'borrowing' from Dionysius' *The Mystical Theology*.⁶⁴¹ If Pickering is correct in her surmises, then there are grounds to suppose that Bion himself was a covert exponent of the practice of 'defensive esotericism' alluded to earlier. It is notable in this regard that Pickering goes on to establish a strong evidential basis not only for supporting her contention that 'the apophatic mystics were a major inspiration for Bion,' but further illustrates in fine detail the extent to which Bion's writings on the abandonment of memory and desire were deeply indebted to the writings of John of the Cross in particular.⁶⁴² Moreover, for Bion, the *technē* of *apophysis* is central to the relinquishment of memory and desire, thereby instantiating an

⁶³⁹ For a brief account of the Purkyně shift, the effects of which constitutes the physiological context to Bion's remarks on this topic, see CWB VI, p. 5 n.1.

⁶⁴⁰ Pickering, *The Search for Meaning in Psychotherapy*, p. 12. In the estimation of Kenneth Burke, Freudian psychoanalysis was a 'secular variant of negative theology' cited in: Henderson, *Apophatic Elements in the Theory and Practice of Psychoanalysis*, p. 2.

⁶⁴¹ Pickering, *The Search for Meaning in Psychotherapy*, pp. 218-219.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 11, pp. 216-217, pp. 221ff. Notably in this regard, Bion's personal copy of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* is marked in his own hand (see CWB VI: pp. 5-6).

imbricated series of esoteric *technai*, convergently orientated towards the achievement of a state of ‘at-one-ment’ integral to the attainment of ‘O’.⁶⁴³

What I am suggesting, then, is that an effort is required which is an actual discipline, difficult to achieve ... it is a matter of trying to get out of the habit of remembering things, and trying to get out of the habit of desiring or wanting anything *while you are predominantly engaged on your work*. I am not expressing views about this as a philosophy of life or anything; it is simply an attempt to promulgate an actual rule – as if one could make rules for psychoanalytic training. This is the kind of rule that I would like to make The consequences of this ... are peculiar ... in order to see clearly one really needs to be pretty well blind – metaphorically and literally. It is really a sort of positive lack of anything in one’s mind...the darker the spot that you wish to illuminate, the darker you have to be – you have to shut out all light in order to be able to see it. Only in that way is it possible to get the conditions in which a real object– but one which is formless and not in any way appreciable to what we ordinarily regard as the senses – emerges, evolves, and becomes possible for us to be aware of (CWB VI: 12-13.)

According to Francesca Bion, this ‘technique ... was central to Bion’s own psychoanalytic method’ (CWB XV: 107):

Every session must have no history and no future—the only point of importance in any session is the unknown ... Bion knew that it was extremely difficult to achieve

⁶⁴³ Grotstein explicitly links Bion’s ideas on the eschewal of ‘memory and desire’ with the passages previously cited from the Freud—Andreas-Salome correspondence—see James S. Grotstein, ‘Notes on Bion’s “Memory and Desire”,’ *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry* 28: 4 (2000), p. 687.

and can at first arouse fear and anxiety in the analyst, but he also knew from experience and perseverance that it make [sic] possible what he called ‘at-one-ment’ with the patient (ibid.)

The application of this Bionian *technē* within the analytic session not only serves to increase the receptivity of the analyst to the patient’s projective transidentificatory communications, but also promotes the integration of right and left hemispheric brain functioning, thereby enhancing the analysis.⁶⁴⁴ However, before the analyst can embark upon this process of arriving at a state of ‘at-one-ment’ with the analysand, he or she must first learn how to therapeutically navigate the associated alterations in consciousness (arguably akin to those encountered in a state of hypnagogia) commonly referred to in the Bionian lexicon as entailing access to a state of *reverie*.⁶⁴⁵ Moreover, in Grotstein’s estimation, it was during such altered states that ‘Bion *dreamed* his utterances and his writings ... he spoke and wrote in a transformational state of reverie (wakeful sleep)’.⁶⁴⁶

According to Bion, the analyst, in response to and in resonance with the emotional outpourings from the analysand, must allow himself, in a state of reverie, to become induced into a trance-like state in which his (the analyst’s) own, native internal reservoir of emotions and repertoire of buried experiences can become selectively

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 692. For a more detailed account of the concept of ‘projective transidentification,’ see Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, pp. 168-189.

⁶⁴⁵ For some helpful background on how this term was originally developed by Bion, see Lopez-Corvo, *The Dictionary of the Work of W.R. Bion*, pp. 167-168; Sandler, *The Language of Bion*, pp. 643-646; Vermote, *Reading Bion*, p. 76. According to André Green, ‘The capacity for reverie is merely the visible aspect of a largely unconscious form of thought’ (‘Review of *Cogitations*,’ cited in: CWB XI: 355). For an influential post-Bionian elaboration of the concept of reverie, see Thomas H. Ogden, *Reverie and Interpretation* (London: Karnac, 1999). For an in-depth account of the phenomenon of hypnagogia, see Andreas Mavromatis, *Hypnagogia* (London: Thyrsos Press, 2010).

⁶⁴⁶ Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 15. Grotstein has described how in his own analysis with Bion, ‘At times I would feel myself descending into a trance and felt that I was hovering about at the morning of time’ (ibid., p. 32).

recruited to match those he is experiencing resonantly from the analysand's inductions—and then *become* them (transformations *in* O) ... Then the analyst ponders over his experience, thinks about it, and then interprets it (T O→K).⁶⁴⁷

Although Bion's concept of reverie bears some comparison with Freud's notion of 'free floating attention,' it may perhaps be more accurately construed as an example of the way in which Bion sought to adapt 'classical concepts in a new way and within a different framework'.⁶⁴⁸ Moreover, the concept itself has become the locus for a complex eco-system of associated ideas that includes not only unconscious perception and communication, empathy and intersubjectivity, but whose clinical applications were arguably prefigured in the experiments undertaken by Sándor Ferenczi and Elizabeth Severn into the phenomenon of 'intersubjective dream-work'.⁶⁴⁹ Furthermore, the meditative states arising out of the esoteric *technai* of *reverie* and *a beam of intense darkness* are intriguingly reminiscent of the alterations in consciousness induced in research subjects during the course of administering the *ganzfeld procedure* that is commonly employed by experimenters conducting research into modes of anomalous information transfer such as telepathy.⁶⁵⁰ The utility of the *ganzfeld* procedure as an empirical research technique is premised on the idea that:

⁶⁴⁷ Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 54.

⁶⁴⁸ Christina Wieland, 'Freud's influence on Bion's thought: Links and transformations,' in: Torres and Hinshelwood, *Bion's Sources*, p. 117, p. 110.

⁶⁴⁹ Marcio Leitão Bandeira, 'Unconscious Perception and Reverie: An Intersubjective Connection,' *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 77:3 (2017), pp. 265-266.

⁶⁵⁰ For comparisons between meditation and reverie, see Paul Cooper, 'Zen Meditation, Reverie, and Psychoanalytic Listening,' *The Psychoanalytic Review* 101: 6 (2014), pp. 795-813 and Esther Pelled, 'Learning from Experience: Bion's Concept of Reverie and Buddhist Meditation: A Comparative Study,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 88 (2007), pp. 1507-1526. The term *ganzfeld* is taken from the German for 'total field,' and was originally developed as a research technique during the 1930s. For helpful accounts of the *ganzfeld* procedure, see Imants Barušs, *Alternations of Consciousness: An Empirical Analysis for Social Scientists* 2nd ed. (Washington: The American Psychological Association, 2020), pp. 15-17; John Beloff, *Parapsychology: A Concise History* (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), pp. 165-167; and Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing* (New York: Bantam Books, 2007), pp. 194-211. Notably, Mayer recounts a first-hand experience of undergoing the *ganzfeld* procedure, during the course of which she relates what purportedly appears to be an instance of anomalous information transfer that occurred at an unconscious level of perceptual awareness—see *ibid.*, pp. 205-211.

... anomalous cognition might best be characterized as a set of weak perceptual signals that ordinarily went unnoticed, drowned out by the noise of everyday life ... The idea behind the ganzfeld technique was to deprive subjects of as much outside sensory stimuli as possible ... The goal of the ganzfeld state was to create an unchanging sensory field. In the absence of new input, the nervous system gradually became responsive to faint, barely noticeable perceptions that were normally overwhelmed by the constant stimulation of perpetually shifting perceptual environments.⁶⁵¹

It is in the light of such phenomenological isomorphisms aligning parapsychological research methodologies to post-Bionian clinical techniques that we can begin to see how Grotstein came to associate Bion's idea of 'transformations in O' with a communicative 'spectrum that ranges from telepathy or ESP ... or even prescience, to subtle bodily evoked communications'.⁶⁵² Having briefly delineated a series of esoteric *technai* actively employed by Bion in his later writings, we can now move on to consider his covert adoption of the Jewish Kabbalah as a 'framework' for psychoanalysis.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵¹ Op. cit., pp. 193-194. The history and politics of research utilising the ganzfeld procedure is a fascinating topic in its own right, and includes both exemplary instances of high-quality, collegial debate occurring between its advocates and its critics, as well as less savoury attempts made by self-appointed 'guardians' of the scientific 'establishment' to suppress some of the more 'controversial' findings arising out of such research programmes—see Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*, pp. 198-203, pp. 119-127 for more on this.

⁶⁵² James S. Grotstein, "...But at the same time and on another level" *Psychoanalytic Theory and Technique in the Kleinian/Bionian Mode Volume 1* (London: Karnac, 2009), p. 270.

⁶⁵³ For a brief introduction to the Jewish Kabbalah and its relation to Freudian psychoanalysis, see chapter three subsection five of this thesis.

5.4. Bion and the Kabbalah

[There] was a spontaneous interchange I had with Wilfred R. Bion in 1978, the year before he died ... out of the blue he asked, ‘Do you know the Kabbalah, the Zohar?’ As far as I was aware, there was no preparation for this remark. He just said it. I was a bit taken aback and said, ‘Well, I know it, but I don’t really *know* it’ ... He quickly said, ‘I don’t either, really know it,’ modestly reassuring me. It was established that neither of us were scholars, experts, ‘knowers’, but had awareness, acquaintance. There was a pause. Then he looked at me and said, ‘I use the Kabbalah as a framework for psychoanalysis’.⁶⁵⁴

The above meeting proved to be a momentous encounter for Michael Eigen, at least insofar as it provided the inspiration for a ‘trilogy’ of books that he subsequently authored some three decades later in which he sought to explicate at length the Kabbalistic influences and inflections that he discerned to be active within the Bionian *corpus*.⁶⁵⁵

One notable consequence that ensued from these exegetical efforts was that Eigen has come to be identified by at least one major contemporary Kabbalistic scholar as ‘the most prominent psychological thinker to be significantly influenced by Kabbalistic and other

⁶⁵⁴ Michael Eigen, *Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2012), pp. ix-x. See also Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 117, in which he makes reference to a personal exchange he had with Bion in 1976, in which the latter made reference to his deep interest in the Kabbalah. As a gloss to these exchanges, see the following: ‘I use the term “esoteric” to denote that which cannot be communicated fully in writing and which should be only alluded to partially in written form and transmitted orally,’ Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision And Imagination In Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 189.

⁶⁵⁵ Eigen, *Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis*; Michael Eigen, *A Felt Sense: More Explorations of Psychoanalysis and Kabbalah* (London: Karnac, 2014a); Michael Eigen, *The Birth of Experience* (London: Karnac, 2014b).

Jewish texts'.⁶⁵⁶ This assessment is perhaps not so surprising when we consider the extensive nature of his studies into the Kabbalah, which have included meetings with figures such as R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson, the last rebbe of Habad Hasidism.⁶⁵⁷ However, it is evident from Eigen's own account that the initial impetus for his Kabbalistic studies originated from his seminal encounter with Bion in 1978, as a consequence of which he has—amongst many other things—gone on to become the pre-eminent interpreter and exponent of the role played by the Kabbalah in post-Bionian psychoanalysis.⁶⁵⁸ For Eigen, the Kabbalah denotes 'a loose term that covers an archipelago of possibilities,' whose historical, geographical and authorial pluralism eludes the provision of simple definitions, or the reduction of complexity to an easily communicable, systematised teaching.⁶⁵⁹ With regards to making the case for its significance within psychoanalysis (or, 'at least the psychoanalysis I am interested in'), Eigen identifies seventeen 'intersections' between psychoanalysis and Kabbalah—a figure which he otherwise treats as an approximation that serves to illustrate its pervasive influence throughout psychoanalytic theory more generally.⁶⁶⁰ However, whilst the figures of Freud and Klein are integral to Eigen's overall narrative, it is to the writings of Bion that he most frequently turns in his attempts to foreground and articulate the theoretic reach of Kabbalah in psychoanalysis—efforts which he nonetheless brackets with the rhetorical disclaimer, 'everything I say is hypotheticalal, fantasy, attempts to express the inexpressible'.⁶⁶¹ Such caveats notwithstanding, by the time

⁶⁵⁶ Jonathan Garb, *Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 10. See also Joseph H. Berke and Stanley Schneider, *Centers of Power: The Convergence of Psychoanalysis and Kabbalah* (New York: Jason Aronson, 2008) in which the role of the Kabbalah in the writings of Bion is discussed at some length.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid. For a more detailed account of Eigen's studies on the Kabbalah, see Eigen, *Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 3-4, pp. 129-131.

⁶⁵⁸ In the estimation of Berke and Schneider, *Centers of Power*, p. 6, the Kabbalah itself is one of the 'principle sources' for psychoanalysis.

⁶⁵⁹ Eigen, *Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis*, p. xi.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 40ff.

⁶⁶¹ Op. cit., p. 79.

we reach the third book in Eigen's Kabbalistic 'trilogy,' we encounter the following unambiguously worded evaluation, 'Once one begins to look at the interplay of Bion and Kabbalah, interweaving themes become obvious'.⁶⁶²

Eigen devised the striking neologism 'O-gram' to denote his Kabbalistically-informed interpretation of two enigmatic 'genograms' that Bion included in his *Cogitations* (1958-1979) (CWB: XI 310, 312). Moreover, he extends his exegesis of these Kabbalistic parallels to include within their ambit the enigmatic psychoanalytic 'cartography' developed by Bion under the aegis of his (in) famous 'grid'.⁶⁶³ Eigen goes on to describe these parallels in a language notable for its powers of poetic evocation:

Let me sum up some of the overlapping themes in Bion and Kabbalah: catastrophe, faith, intensity of affect, shatter and transformation. Bion's grid and O-grams are like inversions of the *sephirot* ... The grid as a whole can be taken to portray growth of thought, experience and feeling. I propose that it explores growth of sensation as well. The forest can easily be lost in the trees, so before I get bogged down in details, let me say that the whole grid quivers, trembles, is aglow. It shakes like a jelly, ripples, and, like the *sephirot*, any part can link with any other and all parts are contained in each other. All parts of the grid, like the *sephirot*, express transformations.⁶⁶⁴

There is evidence that Bion consulted at least two works by the founder of modern Kabbalistic scholarship, Gershom Scholem (1897-1982). Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1955) is cited by Bion in his bibliography for *Attention and Interpretation* (1970);

⁶⁶² Eigen, *The Birth of Experience*, p. x.

⁶⁶³ See CWB X: 7-32; Lopez-Corvo, *The Dictionary of the Work of W.R. Bion*, 115-124 for more detailed accounts of Bion's development and use of the grid.

⁶⁶⁴ Eigen, *Kabbalah and Psychoanalysis*, p. 26, p. 109.

whilst a copy of Scholem's *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (1965) is known to exist in Bion's personal library.⁶⁶⁵ In the absence of a detailed explication of any annotations that Bion may have made in his original copies of these two texts, one can only speculate as to their potential significance for the development of Bion's own ideas.⁶⁶⁶ However, such limitations notwithstanding, we can nonetheless discern the presence of some thematic contiguities and parallels, the details of which it will be worthwhile alluding to briefly, albeit with the proviso that nothing of a definitive nature can thereby be adduced regarding Bion's usage of these particular texts. Indeed, as we saw earlier, such reticence with regards to identifying his indebtedness to third-party sources constituted a notable feature of Bion's use of sources more generally. Moreover, it is worth remarking in the present context that during the course of reading Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1965),⁶⁶⁷ Bion would have encountered Jung's account of a series of Kabbalistic 'visions' which he experienced over a period of some three weeks subsequent to his suffering from a heart attack in 1944. As Jung subsequently remarked, 'It is impossible to convey the beauty and intensity of emotion during those visions. They were the most tremendous things I have ever experienced'.⁶⁶⁸

Although Bion averred that his knowledge of mysticism came only via 'hearsay,' it is nonetheless possible to surmise that his reticence on such matters may have been at least partially motivated by the exigencies arising out of a strategy of 'defensive' esotericism alluded to earlier. Moreover, according to Scholem, the practice of reticence with regards to the disclosure of first-hand 'mystical' experience was congruent with the tenets of traditional

⁶⁶⁵ Sandler, 'The Origins of Bion's Work,' p. 181 (table 1).

⁶⁶⁶ Unfortunately, my own attempts to obtain access to the original texts proved unsuccessful.

⁶⁶⁷ See n. 602 in this chapter.

⁶⁶⁸ Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 326. For a very helpful commentary on Jung's Kabbalistic visions, see Sanford L. Drob, *Kabbalistic Visions: C. G. Jung and Jewish Mysticism* (New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2010), pp. 207-227.

Kabbalistic teaching.⁶⁶⁹ Scholem himself drew attention to the significant parallels that he adduced between the practice of ‘free association’ in psychoanalysis and the Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia’s (1240-1291?) meditative method of ‘jumping’ and ‘skipping’ (*dillug* and *kefitsah*).⁶⁷⁰ Furthermore, it is possible to deduce from Scholem’s commentary on Abulafia’s doctrine a distinctively Kabbalistic context for interpreting Bion’s use of esoteric *technai* as a means for accessing ‘O’ within a psychoanalytic setting:

There is a dam which keeps the soul confined within the natural and normal borders of human existence and protects it against the flood of the divine stream ... the same dam, however, also prevents the soul from taking cognizance of the divine ... As the mind perceives all kinds of gross natural objects and admits their images into its consciousness, it creates for itself, out of this natural function, a certain mode of existence which bears the stamp of finiteness. The normal life of the soul ... is kept within the limits determined by our sensory perceptions and emotions, and so long as it is full of these, it finds it extremely difficult to perceive the existence of spiritual forms and things divine. The problem is, therefore, to find a way of helping the soul to perceive more than the forms of nature, without it becoming blinded and overwhelmed by the divine light.⁶⁷¹

There are grounds for supposing that Bion may have drawn at least some of his inspiration for chapters six and seven of *Attention and Interpretation* (1970) (CWB VI; 273-290) from

⁶⁶⁹ ‘Jewish mystics are inclined to be reticent about the hidden regions of the religious mind,’ Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946/1995), p. 121.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁶⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 131-132. Later in the same text, Scholem provides an intriguing account of a book written by an anonymous disciple of Abulafia’s, in which the author described an encounter with some ‘Moslem ascetics,’ who ‘employ all manner of devices to shut out from their souls all “natural forms” ... This removal of all natural forms and images from the soul is called with them *Effacement*’. Cited in Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 147.

Scholem's *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. For the purposes of comparison we might note, for example, the following:

The mystic may declare himself as revolutionary or he may claim that his function is to fulfil the laws, conventions, and destiny of his group. It would be surprising if any true mystic were not regarded by the group as a mystical nihilist at some stage of his career and by a greater or less proportion of the group. It would be equally surprising if he were not in fact nihilistic to some group if for no other reason than that the nature of his contribution is certain to be destructive of the laws, conventions, culture, and therefore coherence, of a group within the group, if not the whole group ... The disruptive force of the mystical nihilist, or of the mystic whose impact on a particular group is of a disruptive or nihilistic character, extends to and depends on the Language of Achievement, be it expressed in action, speech, writing or aesthetic (CWB VI: 275.)

In Scholem's *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, we encounter the following remarks, the details of which could arguably be construed as constituting an exegetical backdrop to those observations of Bion's just alluded to:

The mystic who lends new symbolic meaning to his holy texts, to the doctrine and ritual of his religion ... discovers a new dimension, a new depth in his own tradition ... He bows to no authority in pious veneration, but this does not prevent him from transforming it, sometimes radically. He uses old symbols and lends them new meaning, he may even use new symbols and give them an old meaning—in either

case we find dialectical interrelationship between the conservative aspects and the novel, productive aspects of mysticism.⁶⁷²

Notably, we find in the pages immediately prior to this extract the following apposite remarks made by Scholem concerning the Kabbalist Isaac Luria (1534-1572). Bion not only alluded to the figure of Luria on a number of occasions throughout the course of his own writings, but seemed also in some regards to draw upon Luria's very particular approach to reinvigorating the Jewish mystical tradition as a source of inspiration for guiding his own comparable innovations in psychoanalysis.⁶⁷³ Moreover, Luria—much like Bion himself—was reticent with regards to the sources that he drew upon for his inspiration.⁶⁷⁴ Indeed, there are grounds to suppose that in many respects the approach that each of these two figures took with regards managing the tensions between conservatism and innovation as manifested within their respective spheres of activity bore striking parallels with each other:

Luria represents both aspects of mysticism in their fullest development. His whole attitude was decidedly conservative. He fully accepted the established religious authority, which indeed he undertook to reinforce by enhancing its stature and giving it deeper meaning. Nevertheless, the ideas he employed in this seemingly conservative task were utterly new and seem doubly daring in their conservative context. And yet, for all their glaring novelty, they were not regarded as a break with traditional authority ... But though defined in traditional categories, this new

⁶⁷² Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996 [1965]), pp. 22-23.

⁶⁷³ See, for example, the following: 'The problem posed by the relationship between the mystic and the institution has an emotional pattern that repeats itself in history and in a variety of forms. The pattern may appear in the relationship of new phenomena to the formulation that has to present it ... [such as] ... the relationship of the rabbinical directorate of the Kabbalah to revolutionary mystics such as Isaac Luria ...' (CWB VI: 284).

⁶⁷⁴ See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, p. 21.

authority, once accepted, brought about profound changes in Judaism, even when its advocates claimed to be doing nothing of the sort.⁶⁷⁵

Bion himself was explicit in the comparisons that he sought to adduce between the history of psychoanalysis and the history of mysticism:

My object is to show that certain elements in the development of psycho-analysis are not new or peculiar to analysis, but have in fact a history that suggests that they transcend barriers of race, time, and discipline, and are inherent in the relationship of the mystic and the group (CWB VI: 284.)

While it may be excessively speculative to construe Bion's writings on 'the mystic' and 'the group' as providing—at least in places—a kind of veiled 'autobiography,' there are nonetheless grounds to suppose that this may (at times) in fact have been the case. For example, when we read in chapter seven of *Attention and Interpretation* of an 'individual' (whose activities vis-à-vis the 'group' also appear to place him under the rubric of 'mystic') is imagined in his 'epitaph' as someone who was 'loaded with honours and sank without a trace' (CWB VI: 287), we can arguably discern in the rhetorical irony of this remark a covert autobiographical allusion.⁶⁷⁶ If we were to extend this reading further, it would perhaps be not too much of a leap to interpret Bion's remarks on the tensions conjoining the 'mystic' to the 'group,' as providing a thinly disguised commentary on how he had come to perceive his own role as a leading London Kleinian leading up to his departure for California in 1968.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ See, for example, the following: 'When once asked why he moved to Los Angeles from London, he humorously answered that "I was so loaded with honors, I nearly sank without a trace!"' Grotstein, 'Wilfred R. Bion: The Man, The Psychoanalyst, The Mystic,' p. 5. See also LAS, p. 52, where this same remark is referenced by Bion in the context of a seminar (14 April 1967).

Having outlined selected aspects of the Kabbalistic ‘framework’ active within the late Bionian *corpus*, I would now like to conclude this sub-section by putting forward a case for conceptualising the convergence of Platonism and Kabbalah in Bion’s writings as constituting a *de facto* modern day reconfiguration of Late Antique theurgy translated into a contemporary psychoanalytic register. The practice of theurgy has been described as ‘notoriously difficult to define, partly because ancient philosophers conceived of theurgy as a way of life or, strictly speaking, as a way of being, as well as a nexus of ritual practices’.⁶⁷⁷ This caveat notwithstanding, theurgy may nonetheless be briefly defined as ‘a set of ritual practices coupled with a way of life based on ethical and intellectual practices. The aim of theurgy was contact with, assimilation to and, ultimately, union with, the divine’.⁶⁷⁸ While attempts have been made to derive theurgy from Hermetic and Ancient Egyptian sources, its formation as a series of ritual-noetic practices is commonly dated from the mid to late second century A.D. in the wake of the composition of the fragmentary documents known as the *Chaldean Oracles*.⁶⁷⁹ The practice of theurgy entailed the performance of rituals that shared at least some of the characteristics of ‘magic’. Such rituals included the purification of the soul preparatory to embarking upon a hyper-noetic ascent of the divine hierarchy, alongside the adoption of an inner attitude of spiritual receptivity vis-à-vis the ‘gods’ that was explicitly intended to differentiate the activities of the theurgist from the more wilful and instrumentalising *ethos* adopted by the *magoi*.⁶⁸⁰ In its essentials, the cosmology of theurgy

⁶⁷⁷ Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods* (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 24.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁷⁹ Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 126-141; Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (San Rafael: Sophia Perennis, 2010); Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989); Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 35-40.

⁶⁸⁰ Sarah Iles Johnson, ‘Magic and Theurgy,’ in: David Frankfurter (ed.) *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 694-695.

entailed a 'locative' world-view in which the divine order permeated all aspects of reality via a process of natural *sympatheia*, the actions of which have been likened to 'a sort of theologized science'.⁶⁸¹

Theurgy evolved out of Platonism and was further developed by later Platonists such as Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius.⁶⁸² Although its rituals entailed the induction of trance states, as well as the use of *telestika*, the 'Iynx-Wheel' and 'symbola,' fragments from the *Chaldean Oracles* imply that rituals 'could also be interpreted as stages of an inner process without any exterior physical action'.⁶⁸³ It is important to note that 'within its cultural context, Neoplatonic ritual is an element within a wider rational system'.⁶⁸⁴ Mazur has coined the term 'inner ritual' to express the notion of 'ritual' as a noetic act.⁶⁸⁵ As we shall see shortly, such an understanding of 'ritual' is of significance when we attempt to transpose its 'traces' into a contemporary psychoanalytic context. By the time we arrive at the Byzantine and Renaissance periods, we find that theurgic ideas have become deeply embedded within Christian theology via the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius; moreover, within the context of the Judaic 'mystical' tradition, we also find that theurgy itself has become 'one of the main defining components of the medieval Kabbalah'.⁶⁸⁶ Between the 16th and 19th centuries, the polysemous derivatives of 'theurgy' proliferated under a series of disparate rubrics, some of which bore only a very tenuous relationship to its original meaning.⁶⁸⁷ However, by the mid-twentieth century, 'theurgy' had recovered a degree of

⁶⁸¹ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, pp. 28-29 ff.

⁶⁸² Johnson, 'Magic and Theurgy,' p. 696.

⁶⁸³ Sarah Iles Johnson, *Hekate Soteria* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 82, pp. 87 ff.; Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity: The Invention of a Ritual Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), p. 30, p. 33.

⁶⁸⁴ Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, p. 185.

⁶⁸⁵ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 187. See also Zeke Mazur, 'Unio Magica: Part II: Plotinus, Theurgy, and the Question of Ritual,' *Dionysius* 22 (2004), pp. 29-56.

⁶⁸⁶ Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Theurgy in Late Antiquity*, p. 13; Fishbane, cited in *ibid.*, p. 15, n. 30.

⁶⁸⁷ Johnson, 'Magic and Theurgy,' p. 699.

academic respectability through its adoption by Gershom Scholem as a technical term for describing ‘ascent-centred mysticism as a category’ within Kabbalah.⁶⁸⁸

It is worth remarking upon at this point that, despite his habitual parsimony with regards to the citation of his sources, Bion referenced Gershom Scholem on three occasions, John of the Cross on twelve occasions and Plato on a total of thirty-eight occasions throughout the course of his collected writings.⁶⁸⁹ It is from within the complex conceptual matrix arising out of such ostensibly disparate, yet thematically convergent sources that we find the psychoanalyst and academic scholar of religions, Dan Merkur, assert that: ‘Bion ... was a Neoplatonist ... [who] tailored psychoanalysis to suit his Neoplatonism’.⁶⁹⁰ Both the practices of theurgy and psychotherapy require their adherents to pay close attention to the proper maintenance of ‘ritual space’ as an integral part of their respective practices.⁶⁹¹ Hence, there may be grounds on which to speculate that it was by means of this tacit imbrication of psychoanalysis with the noetic idioms of theurgic ‘inner ritual’ that Bion came to arrive at his revolutionary approach to psychoanalysis in which both analyst and analysand sought to attain a state of radical ‘at-one-ment’ with O, in a manner reminiscent of Jungian intuitions concerning a numinous ‘higher’ Self.⁶⁹² Such processes are comparable with Matte-Blanco’s account of a psychoanalytic subject who ‘may be dwelling psychically in higher dimensions and be able, thanks to bi-logical operations, to experience an object—or self—in a lesser dimension (n-

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 700. See also Claire Fanger, ‘Introduction,’ in: Claire Fanger (ed.) *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2012), pp. 25-26.

⁶⁸⁹ These figures were obtained by consulting the index for CWB.

⁶⁹⁰ Merkur, *Explorations of the Psychoanalytic Mystics*, p. 227.

⁶⁹¹ James Davies, *The Making of Psychotherapists: An Anthropological Analysis* (London: Karnac, 2009), pp. 81-83. See also Henderson, *Apophatic Elements in the Theory and Practice of Psychoanalysis*, p. 148. Notably, Henderson has highlighted the theurgic and liturgical elements in psychoanalysis—see pp. 49-50, pp. 147-150.

⁶⁹² See Andrew Samuels, Bani Shorter and Fred Plaut, *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1986), pp. 135-137 for a helpful overview of the Jungian concept of the Self that emphasises its numinous qualities. It is notable that Jung, too, utilised the rubric of ‘at-one-ment,’ which he deployed as follows: ‘Individuation is an at-one-ment with oneself and at the same time with humanity, since oneself is a part of humanity’ (S. 227), C.G. Jung, ‘Psychotherapy Today,’ in: *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung: Vol. 16. The Practice of Psychotherapy* [trans. R.F.C. Hull] (New York: Routledge, 2014 2nd ed. [1954]).

1)'.⁶⁹³ Hence, it is to a comparison between Matte-Blanco and Bion's speculations concerning an 'infinite' unconscious that our attention shall now turn.

5.5. Jung, Bion, Matte-Blanco—towards a genealogy for an Orphic unconscious

In the estimation of Ignacio Matte-Blanco (1908-1995), 'Many analysts have not taken seriously enough the idea that the mind works within a framework of timelessness and spacelessness'.⁶⁹⁴ In this respect at least, his life's work could be thought of as an extended attempt to rectify this oversight by providing a 'glimpse of the corporal-non-corporal nature of man, seen as a spacelessness-timelessness immersed in a spatio-temporality'.⁶⁹⁵ Although Matte-Blanco and Bion trained as psychoanalysts in London at approximately the same time, both men only became acquainted with each other shortly before the latter's death.⁶⁹⁶ While Bion referred to Matte-Blanco's ideas on only a few occasions throughout the course of his own writings, he nonetheless told his daughter Parthenope that Matte-Blanco's work constituted the best starting-point for comprehending his own ideas. Parthenope subsequently undertook a doctoral thesis comparing their respective usages of mathematical logic in a psychoanalytic context.⁶⁹⁷ In a memorial volume dedicated to the work of Bion, Matte-

⁶⁹³ James S. Grotstein, 'Thinking, Feeling, and Being: Clinical reflections on the Fundamental Antinomy of Human Beings and World. : By Ignacio Matte-Blanco. New York: Routledge, 1988. Pp. 347 [Review], *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 77 (1996), p. 1058.

⁶⁹⁴ Ignacio Matte-Blanco, *Thinking, Feeling, and Being: Clinical reflections on the Fundamental Antinomy of Human Beings and World* (New York: Routledge, 1998 [1988]), p. 5.

⁶⁹⁵ Ignacio Matte-Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets: An Essay in Bi-Logic* [Foreword by Eric Rayner] (London: Karnac, 1998 [1975]), p. 462.

⁶⁹⁶ Viviane Sprinz Mondrzak, 'Psychoanalytic process and thought: Convergence of Bion and Matte-Blanco,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 85: 3 (2004), p. 602. For helpful accounts of Matte-Blanco's life, see Eric Rayner, *Unconscious Logic: An Introduction to Matte-Blanco's Bi-Logic and its Uses* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-7 and Juan Francisco Jordan-Moore, 'Obituary: Ignacio Matte-Blanco 1908-1995,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 76 (1995), pp. 1035-1041.

⁶⁹⁷ Mondrzak, 'Psychoanalytic process and thought,' p. 602. The existence of a 'logical tradition' within psychoanalysis that included figures such as Freud, Ferenczi, Bion and Matte-Blanco is something that has been remarked upon—see Ross M. Skelton, 'Bion's Use of Modern Logic,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 76 (1995), pp. 388-389.

Blanco published a lengthy paper which he concluded by comparing Bion's influence upon him to that of an 'elder brother' or 'father' (1998).⁶⁹⁸ He also made reference to Bion's ideas on a number of occasions in his two major works, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets: An Essay in Bi-Logic* (1975) and *Thinking, Feeling and Being: Clinical reflections on the fundamental antinomy of human beings and world* (1998). In a manner reminiscent of the comparisons made earlier between the ideas of Bion and the quantum physicist David Bohm,⁶⁹⁹ equivalent parallels between the theories of Matte-Blanco and Bohm have also been adduced, suggestive of a 'quantum' convergence in the sensibilities of both authors.⁷⁰⁰ Although Matte-Blanco was a life-long practicing Roman Catholic, he nonetheless endeavoured to keep his writings within the boundaries of psychoanalytic 'science,'⁷⁰¹ although this act of demarcation did not prevent him from hinting that if the findings of Freud were to be reformulated in the light of his own ideas, then 'immanent notions about God, interpreted as bi-logical experiences, lead to interesting perspectives'.⁷⁰² In order to illustrate what Matte-Blanco may have meant by his reference to such 'perspectives,' we can turn to the frontispiece of *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets* where we find, under the representation of an archangel taken from a Byzantine mosaic in Khora Museum, Istanbul, the following evocative 'bi-logical' gloss in which the reader is asked to consider how:

⁶⁹⁸ Ignacio Matte-Blanco, 'Reflecting with Bion,' in: James S. Grotstein (ed.) *Do I Disturb the Universe? A Memorial to W.R. Bion* (London: Karnac, 1983), p. 528.

⁶⁹⁹ See n. 584 and n. 585 in this chapter.

⁷⁰⁰ See Lombardi, 'Whole and/or in bits: Bohm, Matte-Blanco, and (un)consciousness,' pp. 438-446.

⁷⁰¹ However, Matte-Blanco was careful to clarify that '*The philosophy of science which is valid for physical phenomena cannot be applied to psychoanalytic research. New formulations are required for the latter*'—see Matte-Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets*, p. 153.

⁷⁰² Ibid., p. xxvi. For references to Matte-Blanco's Catholicism, see Jordan-Moore, 'Obituary,' p. 1036 and Rodney Bomford, *The Symmetry of God* (London: Free Association Books, 1999), p. 24. The latter text constitutes an in-depth application of Matte-Blanco's ideas to some of the central teachings of Christian theology. It is perhaps worth remarking that a strong case could be made for construing 'traditional' Catholicism as meeting the criteria for being a *de facto* 'esoteric' religion, if Antoine Faivre's esoteric typology—as outlined in chapter one—were to be applied.

the artist intuitively conceived the archangel as a being submitted to laws which are beyond those of Aristotelian logic or of three-dimensional space but which could be ‘translated’ or ‘unfolded’ into these laws.⁷⁰³

The difficulties encountered in the course of attempting to unpack the implications arising from such an exegesis are further compounded when we consider that ‘*the principle of symmetry is an external logical way of describing something which in itself is completely alien to logic*’.⁷⁰⁴ The existence of a specifically *clinical* convergence between Bion and Matte-Blanco has been elaborated upon at some length by Lombardi.⁷⁰⁵ While it is impossible in the present context to provide a comprehensive overview of Matte-Blanco’s highly innovative theory of the unconscious, it will nonetheless be useful at this point to set out a very brief outline of its essential characteristics as the precursor to embarking upon a brief account of his indebtedness to a series of esoteric sources whose presence, it is argued, inform and augment his more explicit deployment of the conceptual models provided by Freud and Klein.⁷⁰⁶

According to Matte-Blanco, rather than conceptualising the fundamental antinomy of the psyche as consisting in the demarcation between conscious and unconscious, it is more accurate to speak in terms of two modes of being that can be distinguished by the respective characteristics of *symmetry* and *asymmetry*:

⁷⁰³ Matte-Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets* (frontispiece).

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 148. The meaning of the term *symmetry* as used in this context is defined below.

⁷⁰⁵ See Riccardo Lombardi, *Formless Infinity: Clinical Explorations of Matte-Blanco and Bion* [preface by Owen Renik; trans. by Karen Christenfeld et al.] (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁷⁰⁶ Notably in this regard, at least one recent study has sought to contextualise Matte-Blanco’s ideas by situating his theory of mind within the ambit of the ‘filter’ theory of consciousness proposed by figures such as William James, Frederic Myers and Henri Bergson—see Lionel Corbett, ‘Is the Self other to the self? Why does the numinosum feel like another? The relevance of Matte-Blanco to our understanding of the unconscious,’ *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 65: 4 (2020), p. 674. See Rayner, *Unconscious Logic* for a helpful in-depth introduction to the work of Matte-Blanco.

The *asymmetrical mode of being* is characterised by its capacity to use asymmetrical relations which are the basis of Aristotelian logic. Things are divided, individuated and separated. Time, space and causality are felt to exist ... The *symmetrical mode of being*, on the other hand ... experiences the world as undivided, infinite and at the same time spaceless/timeless *and* multidimensional. Part and whole are seen as equal, and normal laws of logic do not appear to exist.⁷⁰⁷

Active within this ontological antinomy, Matte-Blanco posits the existence of three co-existing modalities of ‘logic,’ namely symmetrical, asymmetrical and bi-logic, the latter of which is composed from the various logical dialectics that are created from the interplay arising between the logics of symmetry and asymmetry. Matte-Blanco extends this account to include a series of five strata, through which he seeks both to demarcate and to delineate the complex range of logics operative between the homogeneous and heterogeneous strata of the psyche.⁷⁰⁸ The specific features of these discrete ‘bi-logics’ are denoted by means of the introduction of a range of distinctive neologisms that include: *Alassi* (alternating asymmetrical/symmetrical); *Simassi* (simultaneously asymmetrical/symmetrical); and *Tridum* (tridimensionalized bi-logical structure). Matte-Blanco augments this account with the inclusion of an additional concept, which he terms the *epistemological see-saw*, a term which serves ‘to designate a curious alternation of manifestations of both modes, which has some similarity to both the Alassi and the Simmassi types of bi-logical structures, without, however, being either of them’.⁷⁰⁹ One is left with the impression that this proliferating bi-

⁷⁰⁷ Pihla Alava, (2010) *Infinite Emotion: Matte-Blanco’s Bi-Logic in Psychoanalytic Context*. PhD thesis, University of Dublin, Trinity College, p.23.

⁷⁰⁸ See Richard Carvalho, ‘Matte-Blanco and the Multidimensional realm of the Unconscious,’ *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 26: 3 (2010), to which this brief account is indebted.

⁷⁰⁹ Matte-Blanco, *Thinking, Feeling, and Being*, p. 49. Notably, Matte-Blanco goes on to illustrate this concept by drawing upon an example taken from Bion’s *A Memoir of the Future* (1975).

logical typology could be infinitely extended until such times as a state of absolute symmetry is achieved.⁷¹⁰ The notion of infinity is fundamental for both Bion and Matte-Blanco's respective theories concerning the attainment of mystical states.⁷¹¹ One of the associated corollaries arising from this process of bi-logical stratification in the psyche is that different modalities of discourse need to be utilised dependent upon the proportion of asymmetry to symmetry present in the speech-act articulated.⁷¹²

Having briefly set out the essential features of Matte-Blanco's conceptualisation of an 'infinite' unconscious, we can now conclude this section by drawing attention to its convergence with a Jungian-Bionian model of a numinous unconscious.

It is worth emphasising that this understanding of the unconscious is inherently synchronistic with regards to its 'acausal' properties. Matte-Blanco published a paper on Jung's theory of synchronicity as early as 1962, synchronicity being a phenomenon which he considered to constitute a manifestation of symmetrical logic.⁷¹³ It has been remarked that while Matte-Blanco emphasised his indebtedness to Freud, his work was in fact 'highly subversive' to many aspects of orthodox Freudian theory, and was in many respects more closely aligned to Jungian modes of thinking, through which he was to arrive at a model of the unconscious that

⁷¹⁰ 'There are two types of infinitization in bi-logic. Firstly, an individual can become to represent a (unbounded) *set which extends infinitely*. Secondly, any individual can become to represent a (bounded or limited) *set with infinite elements*. Matte-Blanco calls these two types of infinitization *extensive* and *intensive infinite sets*. These correspond loosely to increasable infinities and infinitesimals respectively,' Alava, *Infinite Emotion*, p. 41.

⁷¹¹ 'Bion and Matte-Blanco agree in considering the experience of infinity to be possible at some very special moments of insight, in artistic displays and in mystical states,' Mondrzak, 'Psychoanalytic process and thought,' p. 604.

⁷¹² Bomford (writing with specific reference to theology) identifies five discrete levels of discourse spanning the asymmetrical—symmetrical 'continuum,' which he distinguishes as follows: empirical discourse; devotional discourse; mythical discourse; doctrinal discourse; mystical discourse—see Rodney Bomford, 'Religious Truth in the Light of Bi-Logic,' *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 1: 1 (2004), p. 16.

⁷¹³ Ignacio Matte-Blanco, 'Comentarios sobre la obra "La sincronidad como un principio de relaciones no casuales" de C.G. Jung,' *Actas Lusas-Españolas de Neurología y Psiquiatría* 21 (1962), pp. 283-292. See also Matte-Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets*, pp. 11-12.

is ‘essentially affective, interpersonal and synchronistic’.⁷¹⁴ This can be attributed to the fact that by the time we descend to the level of the *basic matrix*, ‘time and space between objects and events are obliterated’.⁷¹⁵ Jung’s theory of synchronicity has been described as a ‘sophisticated restatement’ of the more ancient theory of *correspondences*, which proposed that ‘reality consists of multiple “levels” which in some manner mirror one another’.⁷¹⁶ Echoes of this ancient doctrine can be discerned within Matte-Blanco’s writings, the component elements of which he initially construes as deriving from a ‘subjective’ source, prior to his subsequently moving towards a position in which he conjectures not only ‘*that each stratum [of the psyche] is present in a mysterious way in every one of the strata which are nearer to the surface,*’ but ‘that there is some sort of morphism between the psychical structure of humanity and the structure of nature’.⁷¹⁷ At the deepest, most symmetrical levels of the unconscious, the territory of the mystic and that of the psychotic become imbricated with each other in a manner reminiscent to those states of mind delineated by William James in his 1896 Lowell lectures alluded to in chapter four.⁷¹⁸

It might be said that symmetrical relations reveal obscure aspects of being, those where the individual merges into the others (through disappearance of contiguity

⁷¹⁴ Richard Carvalho, ‘Synchronicity, the Infinite Unrepressed, Dissociation and the Interpersonal,’ *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 59: 3 (2014), p. 367, p. 381.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., p. 378. On the notion of a *basic matrix*, see the following: ‘The region of the basic matrix is that in which symmetrisation exerts a major influence on representation and is the region of the deeper unconscious...the “region” of the basic matrix is a pure manifestation of being with no happening, where outside and inside do not exist,’ Matte-Blanco, *Thinking, Feeling, and Being*, pp. 193-195. As Matte-Blanco goes on to discuss in some detail in this same text, his idea of a *basic matrix* has major implications with regards to how we conceptualise fundamental psychoanalytic ideas such as ‘introjection,’ ‘projection,’ and especially ‘projective identification’.

⁷¹⁶ Jean-Pierre Brach & Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Correspondences,’ in: *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 278, p. 275. The authors attribute this doctrine to a ‘spontaneous tendency of the human mind,’ the neurobiological origins of which they propose might ultimately ‘lie in the way the human brain uses “topographical maps” to organize data into functional hierarchies’ *ibid.* See also Roderick Main, *The Rupture of Time: Synchronicity and Jung’s Critique of Modern Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013 [2004]), pp. 168-169.

⁷¹⁷ Matte-Blanco, *Thinking, Feeling, and Being*, p. 55, p. 65.

⁷¹⁸ See also Corbett, ‘Is the Self other to the self?,’ p. 679.

relations or space) and into the infinite (through the disappearance of both space and time or relations of succession.⁷¹⁹

With regards to the convergence of Matte-Blanco's ideas with those of Bion, it is striking that both authors were similarly drawn to apophatic modes of discourse in which notions of 'light' and 'dark' are paradoxically 'reversed' via a 'coincidence of opposites,' the teachings regarding which Matte-Blanco appears to have encountered in his study of the writings of Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464).⁷²⁰ It is this 'duplex' account of the human subject as consisting of a *coincidentia oppositorum* that lies at the heart of Matte-Blanco's re-visioning of psychoanalysis:

Therefore, it can be affirmed that there is in the very structure of humans a fundamental antinomy resulting from the co-presence of the two modes of being which are incompatible with one another and, in spite of this, exist and appear together in the same subject.⁷²¹

In the conclusion to this thesis, we shall see how this continuation and elaboration of an 'Orphic trajectory' within psychoanalysis achieved a state of synergistic convergence in the form of James Grotstein's speculations concerning the 'numinous and immanent

⁷¹⁹ Matte-Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets*, p. 265.

⁷²⁰ 'It is my hope that they [his ideas] may have contributed something to illuminating this dazzling light which is at the same time a complete darkness, depending on the angle from which it is looked at,' Matte-Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets*, p. 288. See also Alava, *Infinite Emotion*, p. 24. For an account of Matte-Blanco's interest in the writings of Nicholas of Cusa, see Bomford, 'Religious Truth in the Light of Bi-Logic,' p. 5. Matte-Blanco refers to 'the identity of opposites' in his discussion concerning the four antinomies of the death instinct—see Ignacio Matte-Blanco, 'The four antinomies of the death instinct,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 86: 5 (2005), p. 1469. For a helpful overview of Nicholas of Cusa's teachings, see J.M. Counet, 'Cusa, Nicholas of (Niklaus Krebs) 1401-1464,' in: Wouter J. Hanegraaff et al, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 293-296.

⁷²¹ Matte-Blanco, *Thinking, Feeling, and Being*, p. 70.

psychoanalytic subject' as described in his 'elaborated gnostic gospel of depth psychology,' *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences* (2000), as well as in ensuing developments arising out of the theories and practices of post-Bionian psychoanalysis.⁷²²

⁷²² James Grotstein, *Who is the dreamer who dreams the dream? A study of psychic presences* (New York: Routledge, 2000). See also Kerry Gordon, 'The tiger's stripe: Some thoughts on psychoanalysis, gnosis, and the experience of wonderment,' *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 40 (2004), p. 18.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

WHO IS THE DREAMER WHO DREAMS THE DREAM?

The setting is a bleak piece of moorland in the Scottish Highlands, engulfed by a dense fog. A small portion of the fog slowly clears, and an angel appears surrealistically, asking, “Where is James Grotstein?” The voice is solemn and awesome, almost eerie. The fog slowly reenvelops her form, as if she had never existed or spoken. Then, as if part of a prearranged pageant, the fog clears again; but now some distance away, on a higher promontory where a rocky crag appears from the cloud bank, another angel is revealed, who, in response to the first angel’s question, answers, “He is aloft, contemplating the dosage of sorrow upon the earth”.⁷²³

James Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?*

6.1. Introduction

This thesis has argued for the presence of an *Orphic trajectory* within psychoanalysis, the distinguishing features of which it has traced from its pre-history through to its inception and from there into the present. In the final part of this concluding chapter a case is put forward for construing the latest iteration of this trajectory as taking the form of an esoterically inflected ‘oneiric’ school of post-Bionian psychoanalysis, the salient features of which will

⁷²³ James S. Grotstein, *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences* [with a Foreword by Thomas H. Ogden] (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 5.

be described in due course. However, before we embark upon this itinerary, it will be useful to recap with a summary of the main lines of argument set out in this thesis thus far.

Chapter one provides an overview of the historical and conceptual scope of the thesis and an outline of the methodology that it employs to undertake its exegetical task. It also sets out the ‘personal equation’ that initially inspired this line of enquiry and subsequently provided the impetus for undertaking the research. One of the original contributions made by this thesis consists in its application of ideas and perspectives developed within the academic specialism of Western esotericism to provide an enhanced understanding of the role played by the ‘occult’ and the ‘esoteric’ in the formation of psychoanalysis. To facilitate this task, it develops a distinctive theoretical framework for conceptualising how esoteric ‘traces’ became encoded via a process of *enigmatic signification* to form semiotic *hieroglyphs* whose occluded presence can be longitudinally discerned throughout the course of psychoanalytic history and concept formation.⁷²⁴ Chapter two traces the origins of psychoanalysis’s esoteric ‘dark precursors’ to the various mesmeric, somnambulistic and hypnotic ‘currents’ arising out of the Christian Theosophical, German Idealist and Romantic ‘traditions’. It subsequently explores how these developments contributed to a complex genealogical matrix conjoining mesmerism, animal magnetism, artificial somnambulism and hypnotism to psychoanalysis. Chapter three addresses the complex web of relations—and defensive occlusions—aligning Freudian psychoanalysis to telepathy, fin de siècle occultism, psychical research and the Kabbalah.⁷²⁵ Chapter four focuses upon the pioneering investigations into anomalous phenomena undertaken by the Hungarian school of psychoanalysis as exemplified in the writings of Sándor Ferenczi, Elizabeth Severn and Nandor Fodor, the salient features of

⁷²⁴ John Boyle, ‘Esoteric Trace in Contemporary Psychoanalysis,’ *American Imago* 73: 1 (2016), pp. 95-119.

⁷²⁵ John Boyle, ‘Before and after Science: Esoteric Traces in the Formation of the Freudian Psychoanalytic Subject,’ *Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions* 7 (2019), pp. 59-103.

which it seeks to characterise under the rubric of an ‘Orphic trajectory’ active within psychoanalysis.⁷²⁶ It also highlights the persistence of somnambulistic currents operative within Hungarian developments in trauma theory. Chapter five examines the evidential basis for construing the later writings of W.R. Bion as displaying distinctive apophatic, Kabbalistic and theurgic elements, the distinguishing features of which it argues constitute an integral feature of Bionian theory and technique. It also adduces phenomenological parallels between the Bionian technique of *reverie* and the parapsychological research technique known as the *ganzfeld procedure*.⁷²⁷ The concluding chapter illustrates the persistence of the Orphic trajectory in contemporary psychoanalysis as exemplified in the work of James Grotstein (1925-2015) and the ‘oneiric’ school of post-Bionian psychoanalysis. It also identifies the role of these exponents of the Orphic trajectory as potential contributors towards future developments in psychoanalytic theory and technique.

It is important to emphasise that the Orphic trajectory constitutes but one of the many phenomenological and discursive tributaries that have contributed to the formation of a contemporary pluralistic psychoanalysis. However, its longitudinal influence has played a seminal role in facilitating a conceptual recalibration entailing the re-visioning of post-Bionian psychoanalysis as ‘a *mystical science*, an *emotional science*, a *non-linear*,

⁷²⁶ John Boyle, ‘From Metapsychology to Magnetic Gnosis: An Esoteric Context for Interpreting Traumatic Modes of Transcendence in Sándor Ferenczi’s *Clinical Diary* and Elizabeth Severn’s *The Discovery of the Self*,’ *Psychoanalysis and History* 23: 3 (2021), pp. 297-323.

⁷²⁷ See John Boyle, ‘Mystical *Gnosis* and Esoteric *Technē* in the writings of W.R. Bion,’ *American Imago* (forthcoming). As has been observed, ‘These states of mind [i.e. those state of mind correlated with psi phenomena], not surprisingly, pose challenges to being studied through conventional scientific methods because asking someone to “produce” them at will runs counter to their very “spontaneous” and “uncontrolled” nature. That challenge has sometimes been overcome in Ganzfeld experiments, where the participant is exposed to homogeneous and unpatterned sensory stimulation that induces a similar state ... this state of mind and its attending challenges is probably one quite familiar to the psychoanalytic clinician, as it is none other but the state of “reverie” from which we listen for our patients’ unconscious communication,’ Anca Ivan, ‘Book Review: *Extraordinary Knowing: Science, Skepticism and the Inexplicable Powers of the Human Mind* by Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer, Ph.D. New York: Bantam Dell, 2007, 302 pp.,’ *Fort Da* 15: 1 (2009), p. 109.

intuitionistic science'.⁷²⁸ This 'recalibration' is located in the realm of an 'after' science that simultaneously entails the dialectical recognition of a 'before,' which acknowledges that 'the "occult" was always a part of our scientific and intellectual heritage'.⁷²⁹ In terms of future research, a number of significant figures have been identified whose writings would repay further study being conducted into their use of esotericism in psychoanalysis. The findings from this thesis also suggest that symbols and images derived from esotericism possess the potential to provide a fertile source of inspiration for future developments in psychoanalytic theories of mind and personhood. As Susan Rowland has remarked:

Relatively recent forms of academic study, such as psychology, were constructed by dividing a heritage along lines of 'respectable' proto-scientific ideas and magical practices better forgotten and left in the dark. Unfortunately, these lost magical arts took with them ways of relating to symbols, images and words that are arguably too valuable to discard.⁷³⁰

It is precisely due to their neglected importance that 'occulted' attempts to retrieve these 'lost magical arts' have been embarked upon by an occluded 'lineage' of psychoanalytic practitioners whose indebtedness to elements of esotericism in their psychoanalytic theorising has been foregrounded in this thesis under the aegis of the *Orphic trajectory*.

In order to highlight both the importance and persistence of this trajectory into the present day, the thesis concludes with an illustration of how these 'lost magical arts' have been

⁷²⁸ James S. Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness: Wilfred Bion's Legacy to Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2007), p. 104.

⁷²⁹ Andreas Sommer, 'Are you afraid of the dark? Notes on the psychology of belief in histories of science and the occult,' *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling* 18: 2 (2016), p. 109.

⁷³⁰ Susan Rowland, *Remembering Dionysus: Revisioning psychology and literature in C.G. Jung and James Hillman* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 91.

incorporated into a version of post-Bionian psychoanalysis, the salient features of which are exemplified for my current purposes by James Grotstein in his book *Who Is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream: A Study of Psychic Presences* (2000). Grotstein's work is subsequently aligned with developments arising within the 'oneiric' school of post-Bionian psychoanalysis, the distinguishing features of which, it is further proposed, tacitly identify it as a significant contributor towards the development of a contemporary 'psychoanalytic parapsychology'.

6.2. Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?

James Grotstein was one of a small group of American analysts who extended an invitation to major London Kleinian analysts—notably Hanna Segal, Herbert Rosenfeld, Donald Meltzer and Wilfred Bion—to visit Los Angeles during the early 1960s.⁷³¹ Grotstein coined the rubric of 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' to describe the study group arising from these meetings, thereby giving apt (and witty) expression to the marked degree of ideological turbulence—referred to by its protagonists as 'The Time of Troubles'—that subsequently arose within the Los Angeles psychoanalytic community in response to the appearance of these novel psychoanalytic teaching.⁷³² Grotstein himself underwent an unusually wide psychoanalytic education entailing personal analyses with the classical Freudian, Robert Jokl; the Fairbairnian Ivan McGuire; a third analysis with Wilfred Bion that lasted for some six years before ending prematurely due to the latter's poor health; and a fourth and final analysis

⁷³¹ See Joseph Aguayo, 'The early psychoanalytic work of James Grotstein (1966-1981): turning a Kleinian/Bionian tide away from American ego psychology,' in Annie Reiner (ed.) *Of Things Invisible To Mortal Sight: Celebrating the Work of James S. Grotstein* (London: Karnac, 2017), pp. 4-5. For a helpful overview of Grotstein's early life, see Maureen Franey & James S. Grotstein, 'Conversations with Clinicians: Who is the Writer Who Writes the Books?' *Fort Da* 14: 2 (2008), pp. 87-106. For an incisive account of the role played by Grotstein from the latter part of the 1960s onwards in the politics of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Institute, see Aguayo, 'The early psychoanalytic work of James Grotstein'.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

with the British Kleinian, Albert Mason.⁷³³ However, in Grotstein's estimation, it was his analysis with Bion that '... taught me to revere my own imagination'.⁷³⁴ Notably, it was during the latter stages of his analysis with Bion that Grotstein's first publications began to appear in print.⁷³⁵ Although Grotstein never made any explicit allusion in his own writings to the figure of Orpheus, he was certainly familiar with the myth of Orpheus, having discussed its psychological meaning with Judith Pickering during the course of a visit that she made to his home in Los Angeles.⁷³⁶ Although Grotstein did not encounter Ferenczi's concept of the 'astra' until shortly before his death, his analysis with Bion—coupled with the extensive contributions that he made towards the development of a post-Bionian psychoanalysis—nonetheless locates his work within the ambit of the Orphic trajectory in psychoanalysis.⁷³⁷

The publication of *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* initially met with something of a mixed reception. While some early reviewers lauded it as a 'tour de force' whose 'attempts to theorise at and beyond the mental perimeters of the knowable are as striking as they are clinically invaluable,' less positive commentators remarked that 'Others with less tolerance for imagery and poetry in their consideration of internal worlds will have less patience with Grotstein's approach'.⁷³⁸ Despite such mixed evaluations, Grotstein considered this book to be the one he would most like to be remembered for.⁷³⁹ Perhaps of

⁷³³ Op. Cit., p. 2.

⁷³⁴ Franey & Grotstein, 'Conversations with Clinicians,' p. 101.

⁷³⁵ Grotstein's analysis with Bion began in 1973 while his first publication on the psychoanalytic concept of schizophrenia occurred in 1977.

⁷³⁶ 'We talked avidly about Bion, O, apophatic mysticism, about my analysis of the psychological meaning of the myth of Orpheus and Persephone,' Joann Culbert-Koehn, Ann Casement & Judith Pickering, 'James Grotstein (8 November 1925-30 May 2015),' *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 60: 5 (2015), p. 755.

⁷³⁷ Annie Reiner, 'Ferenczi's "astra" and Bion's "O": a clinical perspective,' in: Annie Reiner, *Of Things Invisible to Mortal Sight: Celebrating the Work of James S. Grotstein* (London: Karnac, 2017), pp. 131-132.

⁷³⁸ Gerald J. Gargiulo, 'Who is the dreamer who dreams the dream? A review essay,' *The Psychoanalytic Review* 88 (2001), p. 483.; Barnett D. Malin, 'Who is the Dreamer who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences: James S. Grotstein. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press. 2000. Pp. 304,' *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 83 (2002), p. 985; Ron Spielman, "'Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream?': A Study of Psychic Presences,' *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 49: 3 (2001), p. 1051.

⁷³⁹ Franey & Grotstein, 'Conversations with Clinicians,' p. 105.

more relevance in the present context is Kerry Gordon's evaluation of Grotstein's book as constituting 'an elaborated Gnostic gospel of depth psychology'.⁷⁴⁰ However, before we can embark upon an assessment of Gordon's claims, it is first necessary to provide an outline of the main ideas and themes encountered in Grotstein's psychoanalytic 'grimoire'.

The text of *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream* begins with a foreword by Thomas Ogden and a preface by James Grotstein—programmatically entitled 'Who Is the Unconscious?'—followed by ten chapters, all of which were previously published by Grotstein as separate articles subsequently revised for the book, the earliest of which appeared in 1979. In his foreword, Ogden emphasised 'Grotstein's ability to convey a sense of unlimited creative potential of the unconscious,' before cautioning 'that any attempt to paraphrase Grotstein is as doomed as an effort to paraphrase a poem'.⁷⁴¹ After introducing an idea of mental health entailing a 'generative tension between the phenomenal subject and the Ineffable Subject of the unconscious,' Ogden glosses Grotstein's conceptualisation of 'rogue subjective objects' (chapter six) by construing them to be an elaboration and extension of Hans Loewald's 'conception of analysis as a process of turning ghosts into ancestors'.⁷⁴² In his preface, Grotstein defined the central task of his book as follows:

I am seeking ways to rescue the id specifically and the unconscious generally from what I believe has been a prejudice—that it is primitive and impersonal, rather than subjective and ultra sophisticated ... one of my aims is to revive the concept of the "alter ego" (second self) in order to restore the unconscious to its former conception

⁷⁴⁰ Kerry Gordon, 'The tiger's stripe: Some thoughts on psychoanalysis, gnosis, and the experience of wonderment,' *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 40 (2004), p. 18.

⁷⁴¹ Thomas Ogden, 'Foreword' in: Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. vii.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, p. viii, p. x.

before Freud, that of a mystical, preternatural, numinous second self—and then to reintegrate that older version with the more positivistic version that Freud gave us.⁷⁴³

In order to facilitate this project, Grotstein set out to replace the secular and scientific terminologies of ‘internal objects’ with a more evocative and experiential lexicon populated by entities such as ‘angels,’ ‘demons,’ ‘ghosts’ and chimerae’.⁷⁴⁴ Grotstein’s preface provides a road-map for his book and introduces many of the central themes subsequently encountered, at least some of which are avowedly Platonic in terms of their theoretic orientation.⁷⁴⁵ Ideas of a ‘sacred architecture of the psyche’ that is inherently ‘preternatural’ are introduced, as are themes derived from ancient Assyrian dream culture, alongside unconscious capacities for prescience and premonition, and a conception of the analyst as a ‘practicing mystic’.⁷⁴⁶ It is no surprise to find in his later writings Grotstein advocating for a version of psychoanalysis in which access to trance states constitutes an acknowledged feature of psychoanalytic practice; while preternatural experiences—such as telepathy and prescience—are construed to possess the potential to be incorporated into a post-Bionian psychoanalysis.⁷⁴⁷ As we saw in chapter five, Grotstein has explicitly alluded to encounters

⁷⁴³ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. xvi. In an earlier paper, Grotstein described Freud as a figure who ‘imposed a catastrophic change on Western philosophy, epistemology, and culture, that was to represent the end of certain belief systems from all ages past and herald the new age of the inner mind. By his neurologising the Unconscious with the instinctual drives and assigning them causal priority for epistemology, affects and behaviour, he ultimately came to demonize the Unconscious and gradually lost sight of the value of its epistemological, existential, and numinous majesty and uniqueness,’ James S. Grotstein, ‘The numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject,’ *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 43 (1996), p. 41.

⁷⁴⁴ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?*, p. 144.

⁷⁴⁵ The famous parable of the cave from Plato’s *Republic* is explicitly cited by Grotstein on pp. xvii–xviii to exemplify the convergence of the religious, the philosophical, the mystical, the psychological and the psychoanalytic.

⁷⁴⁶ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. xxii, p. xxvii, p. xxviii, p. xxx.

⁷⁴⁷ Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 32; James S. Grotstein, “...But At The Same Time And On Another Level...” *Psychoanalytic Theory and Technique in the Kleinian/Bionian Mode Volume 1* (London: Karnac, 2009), p. 270, pp. 297–298.

with telepathic phenomena in his own clinical practice, which he theoretically aligns with Bion's theory of transformations in O.⁷⁴⁸

Chapter one begins with a dream that Grotstein 'witnessed' as a second year medical student, the oneiric effects arising from which were to constitute the experiential 'core' and primary inspiration for many of his future ideas concerning the existence of a duplex 'subject'.⁷⁴⁹ The numinous and uncanny elements of this dream provide the dramatic representation for many of his subsequent reflections concerning the phenomenal and noumenal aspects of a 'preternatural' human subject, whose composite attributes collectively constitute the 'Supraordinate Subject of Being'.⁷⁵⁰ Chapter two begins with an epigraph from the Lurianic Kabbalah ('Keter Ayn Sof shrank and created the universe') as the preamble to Grotstein embarking upon a rationale for adopting—and creatively adapting—Ferenczi's (1932) concept of *autochthony*.⁷⁵¹ While Ferenczi originally utilised this term to distinguish the internal from the external origins of paranoia arising out of trauma, Grotstein extends its theoretical reach to express 'the unconscious phantasy of self-creation *and* of creation of the object' as the preamble to introducing its dialectical partner, '*alterity*, the awareness of the otherness of the object and cocreation by it and with it'.⁷⁵² Grotstein construes *autochthony* and *cosmogony* (i.e. 'the creation of a world order') as principles belonging in the domain of the imagination that govern the process of personalising the random, chaotic data of internal and external experience. He subsequently defines both of these terms as 'faculties that constitute a prophylactic defence against the impact of trauma and Ananke (Necessity or

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ See the epigraph to this chapter for Grotstein's verbatim description of this dream. For an account of the impact of this dream upon his subsequent theorising, see Grotstein, 'The numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject,' p. 45.

⁷⁵⁰ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. 6.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., p. 40.

⁷⁵² Op. cit., p. 38. For a helpful commentary on these concepts, see Dan Merkur, *Explorations of the Psychoanalytic Mystics* (New York: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 273-274.

Fate)'.⁷⁵³ In chapters three and four, Grotstein sets out an extensive introduction to the ideas of Ignacio Matte-Blanco, during the course of which he compares Matte-Blanco's concept of an 'infinite' unconscious with those of Freud and Klein. Notably, Grotstein seeks to draw out the mystical implications that are left implicit in Matte-Blanco's own writings, judiciously drawing upon Gnostic and Kabbalistic themes to illustrate the 'mystical' dimensions he conjectures to exist enfolded within the bi-logical structures of Matte-Blanco's 'infinite' unconscious.⁷⁵⁴

Chapter five provides a highly innovative theory of the 'psychoanalytic subject,' the distinguishing features of which share a striking resemblance to ideas more usually encountered in Gnostic and Neo-Platonic texts. Since the arguments and phenomenological descriptions that it encompasses arguably contain some of the most explicitly esoteric themes to be found in Grotstein's writings, a more detailed account of its contents will be provided in the next section to this chapter.

In chapter six, Grotstein charts an inner topography for the 'demonic third forms' of the internal world, during the course of which he remarks upon the manner in which Freud's overshadowing of his German Romantic inheritance with the materialistic axioms of an 'absolute science' contributed to the creation of 'a lexicon of ontic, mechanistic, dehumanized entities such as "drive" and "object," rather than "homunculi," "chimera," "monsters," "demons," "angels," "ghosts," or "revenants"'.⁷⁵⁵ Grotstein unfavourably contrasts Freud's reductive approach with the more expansive understanding of 'psychic presences' exemplified by C. G. Jung and his followers, and explicitly augments his account

⁷⁵³ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. 51.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78 n.4, p. 81.

⁷⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

by including Kleinian and Bionian perspectives to act as correctives to these deficiencies.⁷⁵⁶

Perhaps most strikingly for a psychoanalyst, Grotstein cites some of his own case material from this chapter as providing anecdotal evidence for Jung's theory of synchronicity.⁷⁵⁷

During the course of his exposition, Grotstein introduces concepts such as 'the magus object,' and addresses a range of 'preternatural' themes, including Hermetic angelology, the Devil and witchcraft.⁷⁵⁸

Chapter seven provides a comparative account of Klein's archaic Oedipus complex and its hypothesised relationship to the ancient myth of the labyrinth, with particular emphasis being given to a clinical example in which extensive parallels are drawn between the myth of the labyrinth and the experience of the dream. In chapters eight and nine, Grotstein advocates for a nuanced use of the Christian *mythos* to creatively augment the insights provided by the Oedipus myth more usually encountered in psychoanalysis. Grotstein utilises these myths to develop clinical concepts, such as the *Piéta transference* and *transcendent position*, before launching upon an extended series of reflections on 'exorcism,' the role of suffering in analysis, and the value of augmenting post-Kleinian theory with the introduction of a 'transcendent position'.⁷⁵⁹ Grotstein takes particular care to highlight that his use of religious

⁷⁵⁶ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. 169. Notably, earlier versions of chapters five, six and seven were originally published in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology*.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151 n. 4.

⁷⁵⁸ *The magus object*: 'The particular use I impute to them [i.e. the magus object] is their power as a superego-type internal object to ensorcell their subjects to play out scenarios seemingly belonging to them, the magi, but which they compel the subjects to enact, for their own good,' *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁷⁵⁹ It seems likely that Jungian sources (specifically, Jung's 'The Psychology of the Transference' [1946]) may underlie Grotstein's formulation of the *Piéta transference* and his 'claim that the analyst must take on the suffering of the patient,'—see Robin S. Brown, *Groundwork for a Transpersonal Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 31. For an intriguing account of Grotstein's more general indebtedness to Jung, see Joann Culbert-Koehn, 'Between Bion and Jung: A Talk with James Grotstein,' *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* 5: 14 (1997), pp. 30-31. In a later work, Grotstein describes how the patient 'becomes more *evolved* as a finite→infinite self by receiving the legacy from his infinite, immortal, godly self. I call this state the attainment of the "transcendent position",' Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 107. The 'theurgic' elements obliquely imbricated in Grotstein's definition of the 'transcendent position' arguably constitutes a part of his inheritance from Bion.

myth is motivated by psychoanalytic concerns, whilst at the same time emphasising his indebtedness to his Jewish inheritance as the inspiration for certain ideas developed in these chapters. However, it is possible to speculate that Grotstein's arguably excessive emphasis upon the avowedly 'psychoanalytic' nature of his interests may have been at least partially motivated by a variant of 'defensive esotericism'; whilst the account that he gives of his Jewish inheritance reads like a deeply felt 'confession' of the spiritual lineage that imbues his writings.⁷⁶⁰ In chapter ten, Grotstein revisits the idea of a 'transcendent position,' which he utilises as the basis for undertaking an intensely 'mystical' reading of psychoanalysis, in which the ideas of Bion and Matte-Blanco are brought into creative rapprochement to form a model of the psyche in which Gnostic, mystical and Kabbalistic themes are aligned into a state of synergistic convergence with his more explicitly psychoanalytic concerns.

Having set out a general overview of the esoteric themes encountered in Grotstein's *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?*, we can now return to chapter five, with a view to providing a more detailed account of Grotstein's radical reconceptualization of a numinous and immanent psychoanalytic subject.

⁷⁶⁰ 'I therefore wish to make clear that I am respectfully Jewish, became Bar Mitzva, am a grandson of a distinguished rabbi, and am a direct descendant of Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shelomo, Kalman, the Vilna Ga'on. Further, I see spiritual Christianity not only as an outgrowth of Judaism but also as a *continuation of Judaism in a different guise*,' Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. 220.

6.3. The numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject⁷⁶¹

Grotstein begins this chapter by reminding his readers that ‘[a]n underlying theme of the entirety of this work is the idea of psychic presences. The idea of a psychic presence borrows heavily from the olden schools of vitalism and animism and yet seems to convey the emotional immediacy of the presence of the essence or being of something or someone’.⁷⁶²

Grotstein then proceeds to adduce parallels between psychoanalytic ideas of the ‘unconscious’ and philosophical conceptualisations of the ‘subject’ and ‘being’, by way of a preamble to embarking upon a series of avowedly ‘highly speculative’ musings concerning the parallels that he adduces between psychoanalysis and certain ‘mystic-religious’ themes encountered in Meister Eckhart, the Gnostics and the Kabbalah, which he subsequently utilises to extend the conceptual reach of his theory of the psychoanalytic subject.⁷⁶³

Grotstein begins his account with a summary of the main theories on subjectivity encountered in psychology and psychoanalysis with particular reference to the work of a number of contemporary psychoanalytic theorists, notably Roger Kennedy, Jessica Benjamin, Frances Moran, Thomas Ogden and Ignacio Matte-Blanco. Whilst drawing extensively upon the work of these authors, Grotstein goes on to propose a version of psychoanalysis that can—at

⁷⁶¹ See Grotstein, ‘The Numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject,’ pp. 41-68. This paper constitutes an earlier version of chapter five of *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* Since this earlier paper provides an illuminating commentary and elaboration of some of the themes more concisely explored in the book chapter, some extracts from this paper are cited in the following footnotes by way of an accompanying commentary. In his 1996 paper Grotstein provides us with the following lapidary definition in which he uncompromisingly asserts, ‘It is my belief that the Subject, like the Unconscious itself, belongs to the domain of the ineffable, the inscrutable, the sacred, the always elusive, perhaps even to the part-divine aspects of ourselves,’ *ibid.*, p. 52. On Grotstein’s debt to Lacan, see *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁷⁶² Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?*, p. 101. See also the following: ‘... the concept of the Subject is dealt with extensively but incognito in terms of the idea of *God* and man’s spiritual connection to Him. Meister Eckhart, like the allegedly heretical Gnostics and Cathars, conceived of two gods, “*God*” and the *Godhead*, the former representing the human’s personal experience with the *immanent* ‘*God*,’ and the latter the utterly ineffable and inscrutable *One*. In the Lurianic Kabbalah, there is mention of the ten *Sephiroth* that extend from the inner, most ineffable Godhead, ‘*Keter Ayn Sof*,’ to the most immanent one to mankind, “*Malkuth*,”’ Grotstein, ‘The numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject,’ p. 46.

⁷⁶³ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?*, p. 138, pp. 101-102.

times—make it appear more like a séance than a medical procedure: ‘Using my own terminology, I would say that the analysand’s Ineffable Subject speaks to his Phenomenal Subject, who feels ... reflexively through the analyst/container’.⁷⁶⁴ Grotstein posits a duplex subject, both holographically unitary *and* bi-logically multi-layered, thereby lending itself to the creation of a virtually unlimited series of component subjectivities inhabiting a psychical continuum that extends from the conscious and pre-conscious layers of the ego through to the noumenal and ineffable reaches of the deep unconscious subject.⁷⁶⁵ Grotstein observes that effective cooperation between the phenomenal and noumenal agencies can be sabotaged by ‘rogue, or renegade subjects,’ the defining features of which share many of the attributes of ‘pathological organizations’ and ‘psychic retreats’ encountered in post-Kleinian theory.⁷⁶⁶ Once such disruptions occur, the ensuing state of alienation manifested between these agencies can result in their taking the form of symptoms.⁷⁶⁷

Grotstein refers in his clinical vignettes to using reverie as a technique for making contact with the disowned or estranged aspects of his patients’ unconscious subjectivity.⁷⁶⁸ Towards the end of the chapter, Grotstein embarks upon an extended series of speculations of an explicitly ‘mystic-religious’ nature, whose provenance is based primarily (but not exclusively) upon inferences deriving from his own clinical experiences established over time. Using Freud’s Schreber case (1911) as the launch pad for his theoretical speculations,

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 114-115 and see also the following: ‘... we might say that an analysand uses his analyst as his own personal mirror so that his inner subject, his soul, may find its reflection—and be contacted anew,’ (p. 130). It is notable that Grotstein employs the metaphor of a Ouija board on at least two occasions to describe the relational dynamics of psychoanalysis—see p. 31, p. 137

⁷⁶⁵ ‘Analogously to Bohm’s (1980) concept of “wholeness and the implicate order,” the subject can be understood as being holistic as well as implicate, i.e., separate as a totalistic, all-encompassing unity *and* multiple, located in many transformations and disguises simultaneously,’ Grotstein, ‘The numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject,’ p. 50.

⁷⁶⁶ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. 124.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 128.

⁷⁶⁸ Op. cit., pp. 135-138. Grotstein may have acquired first-hand experience of this technique during the course of his analysis with Bion—see Grotstein, *A Beam of Intense Darkness*, p. 32.

Grotstein draws upon a bricolage of esoteric and mystical themes that includes (but is not limited to) ideas associated with Platonism, Gnosticism and the Kabbalah, as a prelude to observing that '[i]t may very well be that the unconscious, while not really being the same as the Godhead, may be as close to God (the Demiurge that dwells within us as a direct descendent of the Godhead) as any mortal may ever be'.⁷⁶⁹ In the final summation to this chapter, Grotstein recasts the ostensibly secular subject of psychoanalysis into an explicitly 'mystical' (Neo-platonic) register:

Whereas the Ineffable Subject is numinous, the Phenomenal Subject is secular, manifest, incarnate, palpable. I consider these two subjectivities to be holographically and holistically part of an overall ultimately indivisible subjectivity—the Supraordinate Subject of Being and Agency—which is both holistic and divided. That is, although the Supraordinate Subject overarches the Ineffable Subject and the Phenomenal Subject and is inclusive of them, it can be understood in its own right to holographically include an ineffable as well as a secular (more tangible) aspect. I further hypothesise that this overall subjectivity, which is both ineffable and phenomenal, occurs in an infinite vertical layering of the psyche, thereby imparting structural and topographic complexity to the concept of the subject as well as to the concepts of agency and being.⁷⁷⁰

There are elements of Grotstein's account of a numinous and immanent psychoanalytic subject that, in some respects at least, bear comparison with earlier ideas of a 'transcendental subject,' 'subliminal self' or 'creative unconscious' encountered in the work of figures such

⁷⁶⁹ Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. 139.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

as Carl du Prel (1839-1899), William James (1842-1910), F.W.H Myers (1843-1901), Theodore Flournoy (1854-1920) and—more recently—by Jeffrey Kripal in his theorisation of a *duplex* self:⁷⁷¹

I see transpersonal psychology as a modern expression of an ancient gnosis about the dual nature of human consciousness, a gnosis witnessed to in any number of Indic and Western traditions, and more recently in modern Mesmerism, animal magnetism, psychical research, and psychoanalysis. All these streams *put into conversation* constitute the true origins of my *homo duplex* speculations.⁷⁷²

However, while the proximate source for Grotstein's theory of the psychoanalytic subject appears to have evolved out of a dialogue between eighteenth century literary depictions of the *alter ego* and clinical accounts of a 'dissociative' self,⁷⁷³ its more distal origins can be traced to ideas of a 'divine double,' whose textual antecedents span a range of ancient philosophical schools and heterodox spiritualities, including those of Platonism, Neo-platonism, theurgy and Gnosticism.⁷⁷⁴ Intimations of its activities can be found in nineteenth

⁷⁷¹ See Carl du Prel, *The Philosophy of Mysticism Vol. 1* [trans. C.C. Massey; intro. Rico Sneller] (Hermitix Pub. Re-edition, 2022 [1885]; Andreas Sommer, 'From Astronomy to Transcendental Darwinism: Carl du Prel (1839-1899),' *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 23: 1 (2009), pp. 59-68; Eugene Taylor, *William James on Consciousness beyond the Margin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Courtenay Raia, *The New Prometheans: Faith, Science, and the Supernatural Mind in the Victorian Fin de siècle* (London: University of Chicago, 2019), pp. 97-204; Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 38 ff; Théodore Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars: A Case of Multiple Personality with Imaginary Languages* [trans. Daniel B. Vermilye: foreword C.G. Jung; intro. Sonu Shamdasani] (Princeton University Press, 1994 [1899]); Théodore Flournoy, *Spiritism and Psychology* [trans. Hereward Carrington] (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007 [1911]).

⁷⁷² Jeffrey J. Kripal, 'Gnosissss—A response to Wouter Hanegraaff,' *Religion* 38 (2008), p. 277.

⁷⁷³ In an earlier paper, after alluding to certain tropes found in eighteenth century literature, Grotstein observes that '[t]here was a respectful recognition then of this *'stranger within thee,'* a concept that was to help usher in the nineteenth century obsession with the alter ego or second self, not only in literary fiction but also in neurology and psychiatry in the form of autoscopy, animal magnetism, hypnosis, and the dissociation in hysteria, the latter of which became the provenance of psychoanalysis—but at the expense of the loss of the second self,' Grotstein, 'The numinous and immanent nature of the psychoanalytic subject,' p. 56.

⁷⁷⁴ In his allusions to the literary antecedents to the *alter ego* concept, Grotstein references Stephen D. Cox, *The Stranger within Thee: Concepts of the Self in Late Eighteenth Century Literature* (Pittsburgh, PA: University

and early twentieth-century depictions of the *doppelgänger*; most notably within psychoanalysis in the idea of the ‘double’ as described by Freud in his 1919 paper on ‘The Uncanny’.⁷⁷⁵ In Charles Stang’s estimation, the Freudian conceptualisation of the double, in both its benign and malevolent aspects, constitutes the manifestation of ‘a developmental stage that ultimately supports his theory of repression and his explanation for the emergence of the superego’.⁷⁷⁶ However, it was only subsequent to the publication of Henry Corbin’s *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* (1971) that the idea of a ‘divine double’ reappeared as a serious topic for study within academia.⁷⁷⁷ Describing his approach to this topic as entailing ‘an innovation in philosophical anthropology,’ Corbin proposed that:⁷⁷⁸

To speak of the polar dimension as the transcendent dimension of the earthly individuality is to point out that it includes a counterpart, a heavenly “partner,” and that its total structure is that of a bi-unity, a *unus ambo*.⁷⁷⁹

Notably, one of the key determinants that Stang identifies as distinguishing modern from ancient conceptualisations of the person is that, for the former, the inhabiting ‘powers’ are felt to emerge from a psychologised ‘beneath’; whereas for the ancients, these same ‘powers’ were experienced as descending from a numinous ‘height’.⁷⁸⁰ It is the excesses of this imbalance that Grotstein sought to correct under the aegis of a numinous and immanent psychoanalytic subject. Stang describes how throughout the course of late antiquity disputes

of Pittsburgh Press, 1980). See also Charles M. Stang, *Our Divine Double* (London: Harvard University Press, 2016).

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

⁷⁷⁶ Op. cit., p. 12

⁷⁷⁷ Stang, *Our Divine Double*., p. 6.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁷⁹ Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* [trans. Nancy Pearson] (New Lebanon NY: Omega Publications, 1994 [1971]), p. 7.

⁷⁸⁰ Stang, *Our Divine Double*, pp. 250-251.

arose between Plotinian and Iamblichan accounts concerning whether the ‘descended intellect’ was considered to be capable of maintaining contact with its ‘undescended’ counterpart.⁷⁸¹ Viewed through the lens of this much earlier debate, it is possible to construe Grotstein’s account of the psychoanalytic subject as possessing an essentially ‘theurgic’ dimension, with a version of post-Bionian psychoanalysis constituting the ostensibly ‘secularised’ and immantized ‘ritual’ through which the self-alienated phenomenal subject of the analysand can restore metaphysical contact with its noumenal ‘other’ via the mediation of the analyst conducted through the ‘séance’ of psychoanalysis.

The linguistic resonances active in Grotstein’s writings possess a capacity to potentiate within the engaged reader a state of mind in which ‘religious, philosophical, and mystical studies converge with the psychological and the psychoanalytic’.⁷⁸² It is in this sense that the associated ‘meaning events’ arising from Grotstein’s combination of poetic and apophatic approaches to language converge with Kripal’s ‘thesis that academic writing can also be a form of mystical writing; that is, I want it to function as a kind of “meaning event” in its own right’.⁷⁸³ Much like Grotstein’s own approach to psychoanalytic literary stylistics, Kripal’s ‘approach to the scholar as mystic is unabashedly positive, poetic and romantic’.⁷⁸⁴ More recently, Wouter Hanegraaff has reconfigured Corbin’s concept of the *imaginal* to suit the ‘radical agnosticism’ embodied in his approach to the hermeneutics of mind and text:⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 231-232.

⁷⁸² Grotstein, *Who Is The Dreamer Who Dreams The Dream?* p. xvii.

⁷⁸³ ‘The Meaning event is transreferential. Rather than pointing to an object, apophatic language attempts to evoke in the reader an event that is ... structurally analogous to mystical union,’ Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 10; Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 28.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Hermetic Spirituality: Altered States of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022), P. 367 n. 55.

This paradoxical phenomenon of imaginal perception is not just central to Hermetic spirituality—it lies at the heart of the hermeneutic enterprise that I believe the humanities are all about. The *pharmakon* to which you have been exposed ... was designed to change your consciousness, stimulate your imagination, broaden your horizon, even open doors to noetic insight. I have deliberately tried to draw your mind into profoundly ambiguous realms of human experience and practice, for although their very existence has seldom been recognized in academic research, I see them as essential to human psychology and deserving of very serious attention.⁷⁸⁶

It is precisely these ‘ambiguous realms’ alluded to by Hanegraaff that analysts such as James Grotstein and Wilfred Bion have sought to bring under the purview of a more expansive vision for contemporary psychoanalytic conceptualisations of the subject. Some of the most intriguing developments arising from the respective innovations initiated by both of these authors have occurred under the auspices of the ‘oneiric’ school of post-Bionian psychoanalysis—with Grotstein notably being described as one of its ‘principal authors’.⁷⁸⁷ Hence, it is to these developments that our attention shall now turn.

6.4. The persistence of esoteric *traces* in the ‘oneiric’ school of post-Bionian psychoanalysis

Since the oneiric model of post-Bionian psychoanalysis has its origins in contemporary psychoanalytic field theory, it will be helpful to provide some initial context by locating its

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 367-368.

⁷⁸⁷ Violet Pietrantonio, ‘Why Bion Field Theory?’ *The Romanian Journal of Psychoanalysis* 11: 2 (2018), p. 97.

distinctive features within the wider ambit of psychoanalytic field theory.⁷⁸⁸ The concept of the ‘field’ ultimately derives from physics, where it is utilised to describe ‘the mutual interdependence and influences at a distance that occur between elements of a given system’.⁷⁸⁹ While Donnel Stern has distinguished interpersonal/relational (primarily North American) and Bionian (South American/European) approaches to psychoanalytic field theory, S. Montana Katz has identified the *mythopoetic* (Baranger and Baranger), *plasmic* (North American) and *oneiric* (post-Bionian) models as constituting discrete ‘models’ within contemporary psychoanalytic field theory. Clearly, there is some overlap between these respective demarcations. However, while each of these orientations has subsequently embarked upon its own discrete theoretical trajectory, all of them share a debt to the social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) whose work was to prove influential for the development of ‘field theory’.

Lewin’s field theory entails a conceptualisation of the individual and their environment as existing in a state of mutual interdependency, giving rise to a ‘constellation’ in which behaviour and development occur as functions of a ‘total situation,’ involving the creation of a dynamic field ‘in which the state of any part of the field depends upon every other part’.⁷⁹⁰ Lewin’s ideas—alongside those of Gestalt psychology—had a considerable influence upon the psychoanalytic theory of the ‘bi-personal field’ developed by Madeline and Willy Baranger. Their concept of unconscious phantasy was particularly influenced by Bion’s work

⁷⁸⁸ The following account of psychoanalytic field theory is indebted to these sources: Giuseppe Civitarese, *Psychoanalytic Field Theory: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2022); S. Montana Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Field Theory: Stories, dreams, and metaphor* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Donnell Stern, ‘Field Theory in Psychoanalysis, Part 1: Harry Stack Sullivan and Madeline and Willy Baranger,’ *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 23: 5 (2013), pp. 487-501; Donnell Stern, ‘Field Theory in Psychoanalysis, Part 2: Bionian Field Theory and Contemporary Interpersonal/Relational Psychoanalysis,’ *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 23: 6 (2013), pp. 630-645.

⁷⁸⁹ Civitarese, *Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, p. 7.

⁷⁹⁰ Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, pp. 15-16.

on groups, as well as Susan Isaacs' seminal 1948 paper on unconscious phantasy, resulting in a theory of phantasy in which it is no longer required to possess a source, aim or object, since its origins are ascribed to feelings such as hope, fear and dread, rather than to the primal impulses provided by the Freudian *mythos* of the *drive*.⁷⁹¹ The Barangers' gave particular emphasis to what they termed the *essential ambiguity* of the psychoanalytic situation, this being a state of affairs that entailed the mutual co-creation of the session from within a shared oneiric state of wakeful dreaming. They construed the essential ambiguity of the analytic process as arising out of its synchronous temporality—in which past, present and future spiral through each other simultaneously—thereby evoking within its participants the sense of inhabiting a *mythopoetic* realm of dream or fairy tale.⁷⁹² Its evocation requires the analytic couple to inhabit a shared state of mind in which 'each thing or event in the field be [sic] at the same time something else. If this essential ambiguity is lost, the analysis also disappears'.⁷⁹³ In this regard, the 'essential ambiguity' of the mythopoetic model parallels—in some respects at least—the conceptual attributes and symbolic resonances of a psychologised theory of esoteric *correspondences*.⁷⁹⁴

Proponents of the *plasmic* model have been associated with a range of theoretical approaches, including interpersonal, intersubjective and motivational schools of thought, all of which share a common interest in language, human growth and the development of effective techniques for liberating the analysand from the constraints of distorting and imprisoning psychic structures. The adoption of the rubric *plasmic* (derived from the fourth state of matter, plasma) is intended to convey the idea of particles possessing a fundamentally interactive nature, with each plasma particle being reciprocally affected by the magnetic

⁷⁹¹ Stern, 'Field Theory in Psychoanalysis, Part 1,' pp. 493-494.

⁷⁹² Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, pp. 30-31.

⁷⁹³ Baranger & Baranger, cited in: Stern, 'Field Theory in Psychoanalysis, Part 1,' p. 493.

⁷⁹⁴ On the esoteric theory of correspondences, see n. 716 in chapter 5.

fields of its peers. One corollary of this approach is that it requires the adoption of a theory of brain/mind interaction in which mind is conceptualised as a field phenomenon. The notion of instinctual drives are therefore abandoned, with Jacob Arlow's work on unconscious fantasy being utilised to facilitate an enhanced understanding of fantasy as constituting a fundamental feature of waking and sleeping life. The plasmic model also supports an understanding of unconscious mental processes as possessing an inherently metaphorical quality.⁷⁹⁵

The post-Bionian or 'oneiric' model—otherwise known as Bionian field theory (BFT)—constitutes the most recent of these developments in psychoanalytic field theory, and is centred round the work of a number of Italian analysts in particular, most notably Antonio Ferro and Guiseppe Civitarese. BFT's origins have been dated by Civitarese to 1989, due to the publication in that year of a paper by Bezoari and Ferro entitled 'Listening, Interpretations and Transformative Functions in the Analytical Dialogue,' that definitively established for the first time a clear link between the contributions of the Barangers and of Bion.⁷⁹⁶ Notably, a number of commentators has identified post-Bionian field theory as constituting one of 'the main currents in contemporary psychoanalysis'.⁷⁹⁷ While the proponents of this model are influenced by the work of the Barangers, they draw their main inspiration from the ideas of Bion, making particular use of his theory of the *waking dream thought* to analyse the oneiric quality of sessions, the subjective dimension of which are accessed by means of *reverie*.⁷⁹⁸ This utilisation of a specifically qualitative approach to knowledge requiring a perceptual reliance upon highly rarefied and subtle modes of subjectivity (such as those encountered whilst in a state of reverie) is reminiscent of ideas and

⁷⁹⁵ Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, p. 49, p. 36, p. 44, p. 46.

⁷⁹⁶ Civitarese, *Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, p. 3.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁹⁸ Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Field Theory.*, p. 19.

themes more usually found in esoteric theories of epistemology.⁷⁹⁹ Ferro draws inspiration for his writings from the ideas of the Barangers, Bion, Melanie Klein, Robert Langs and Thomas Ogden, with his own theories being additionally formed by ideas taken from the discipline of narratology.⁸⁰⁰ Ferro's distinctive approach accentuates the mythopoetic aspects of the Barangers' work, which he creatively integrates with Bion's notion of the 'waking dream thoughts,' to arrive at a model of psychoanalysis 'in which the oneiric quality of the sessions is essential and omnipresent,' this assumption being premised upon a clinical trajectory that assumes '[t]he goals of an analytic process are to increase the capacity of the analysand to symbolise, to dream and to feel'.⁸⁰¹

In 2008, Ferro published a subtle and insightful—as well as highly laudatory—review of Grotstein's *A Beam of Intense Darkness: Wilfred Bion's Legacy to Psychoanalysis* (2007).⁸⁰² In this essay, Ferro hints at clinical encounters with quasi-telepathic phenomena, which he conceptualises by utilising ideas taken from post-Bionian field theory. Commenting on Grotstein's concept of projective transidentification, Ferro elaborates as follows:

I believe the concept of projective transidentification allows us to clarify and enrich our understanding, but I also think that there is still a lot of work to be done on the theme of projective identifications. I think that many more things than we currently know and recognize actually occur between one mind and another. As far as the analytic session is concerned, I believe that emotional upsets really can pass from one

⁷⁹⁹ See Glenn Alexander Magee's account concerning the attributes of 'quality' and 'subjectivity' in esotericism outlined in section 1.4. of chapter one.

⁸⁰⁰ Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, p. 58.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58, p. 59.

⁸⁰² Antonino Ferro, 'Book Review Essay: *A Beam of Intense Darkness* by James S. Grotstein' [trans. Andrea Sabbadini], *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 89 (2008), pp. 867-884.

mind to the other, especially if we consider that patient and analyst form a field of emotional forces which belong to both of them.⁸⁰³

In an earlier paper from 2002, Ferro related a clinical encounter with a female patient in which the patient's father's retinal vein thrombosis spontaneously 'healed' subsequent to the narrative of his illness being analysed as part of the wider oneiric field.⁸⁰⁴ While Ferro did not explicitly allude in his case study to Jungian concepts such as 'psychoid' and 'synchronistic,' it is nonetheless difficult for the reader not to employ these terms on his behalf in order to make sense of the material presented.⁸⁰⁵ Indeed, one is left wondering whether or not an element of unconscious disavowal may not be active within Ferro's account. Certainly, the rather oblique rhetoric adopted by Ferro in this case study (in which acausal relations, whilst never explicitly stated, are nonetheless implied) suggests the presence of a synchronistic process conjoining the 'inner world' of the analysis to the 'outer world' from which the story concerning the patient's father was initially taken before being 'dreamt' by the analytic pair. Ferro's implicit 're-enchantment' of an ostensibly 'disenchanted' analytic frame exemplifies Robin Brown's contention that psychoanalysis has tacitly sought to remain 'spiritually

⁸⁰³ Ibid., p. 878.

⁸⁰⁴ Antonino Ferro, 'Some Implications of Bion's Thought' [trans. Philip Slotkin] *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 83: 3 (2002), p. 599-600; Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic field Theory*, pp. 60-61.

⁸⁰⁵ 'Psychoid Unconscious: The idea of the psychoid unconscious was first put forward by Jung in 1946. His formulation has three aspects: (1) It refers to a level of, or in, the unconscious which is completely inaccessible to consciousness. (2) This most fundamental level of the unconscious has properties in common with the organic world; the psychological and the physiological worlds may be seen as two sides of a single coin ... (3) When Jung applied the notion of the archetype to the psychoid unconscious, the psychic/organic link was expressed in the form of a mind/body connection [...] Synchronicity: Repeated experiences that indicated events do not always obey the rules of time, space and causality led Jung to search for what might lie beyond those rules. He developed the concept of synchronicity which he defined in several ways: (1) as an 'acausal connecting principle'; (2) as referring to events meaningfully but not causally related (i.e. not coinciding in time and space); (3) as referring to events that coincide in time and space but can also be seen to have meaningful psychological connections; (4) as linking the psychic and material worlds,' Andrew Samuels, Bani Shorter & Fred Plaut, *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1986), p. 122, p. 146. For more in-depth accounts of these interrelated concepts, see Ann Addison, *Jung's Psychoid Concept Contextualised* (New York: Routledge, 2019) and Roderick Main, *The Rupture of Time: Synchronicity and Jung's Critique of Modern Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013 [2004]).

uncommitted while claiming sympathetic engagement with religion and spirituality ... This is expressed in a conception of the interpersonal field that accepts a disenchanted view of the world as normative'.⁸⁰⁶ Hence, we find Civitarese asserting that to construe Bion as a 'mystic,' is to engage in a 'gross misunderstanding,' before concluding—or perhaps reassuring himself that '... concepts like *faith, O, nameless dread, becoming, evolution*, etc., are by no means religious concepts'.⁸⁰⁷ While it is certainly true that it was a part of Bion's stated theoretical technique to extend his use of terms such as 'mystic' and 'religion' so as to enhance their 'fit' with his own very particular requirements as a theoretician, it is simply inaccurate to present his later writings as though they unambiguously assumed a normative 'disenchanted' world-view.⁸⁰⁸ As Civitarese himself has accurately observed:

The most disingenuous thing there is, but which I suspect is quite widespread, is to think that analysts have a definite and clear concept of the unconscious. *They don't*. The theory, actually a plurality of theories, of psychoanalysis is always evolving. Even a theory is a dynamic field: if one theoretical element changes, all the others change. We can safely assume that we will never come to have a defined and stable concept of the unconscious.⁸⁰⁹

Yet despite these divergences of opinion, there are nonetheless reasons to suppose that deeper confluences might also be at work. Katz has remarked that 'all psychoanalytic perspectives are converging towards the inclusion of a version of a field concept, at least implicitly'.⁸¹⁰ In the final part of this thesis, I will argue that one possible form that this deeper convergence

⁸⁰⁶ Robin S. Brown, *Groundwork for a Transpersonal Psychoanalysis: Spirituality, Relationship, and Participation* (New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 161.

⁸⁰⁷ Civitarese, *Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁰⁸ See chapter five.

⁸⁰⁹ Civitarese, *Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, p. 114.

⁸¹⁰ Katz, *Contemporary Psychoanalytic Field Theory*, p. 160.

could potentially take would entail an increasing rapprochement between psychoanalysis, research into psi, and Jungian analytical psychology, resulting in what could potentially amount to being a re-instantiation of ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology’ within the ambit of contemporary psychoanalysis.

6.5. Coda: post-Bionian psychoanalysis as *A Memoir of the Future*

What is important is to re-consider what Freud called the “pre-history” of psychoanalysis, to return to it with the suspicion that this “pre-history” belongs to a certain future of psychoanalysis rather than to a long-dead past.⁸¹¹

One of the tasks that this thesis set itself relates to the foregrounding of esoteric ‘traces’ in psychoanalysis in order to facilitate their ‘decipherment’ and retrieval, thereby contributing to a revised psychoanalytic metapsychology within whose ambit a more expansive theory of mind and personhood could at least be envisaged, if not yet embarked upon or fully achieved. However, the difficulties associated with such a task are not to be underestimated. As George Makari has remarked:

Modernity has answered many questions, but it has never found a way to fully reconcile the complex triumvirate of body, soul, and mind. Instead, it has left us haunted, divided, with competing histories, values, and rationales that have been at odds ever since [...] A vast attempted synthesis had failed and left behind modern

⁸¹¹ Mikkel Borch-Jacobson, *The emotional tie: Psychoanalysis, mimesis and affect* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 44.

men and women who now must navigate between competing notions of their own being.⁸¹²

However, it is important to contextualise Makari's sombre assessment of our current situation as being situated within a series of wider and more diverse societal debates concerning the limits of contemporary critique, the search for more sophisticated post-critical alternatives, as well as more fundamental proposals advocating for an 'apophatic anthropology' entailing a recognition of the *homo duplex* nature of the human.⁸¹³ Certainly, the question as to establishing the fundamental nature of consciousness—which ultimately lies at the heart of all these debates—is one that remains far from settled:⁸¹⁴

I believe it may be that consciousness does not depend upon a brain for its existence: just, in the absence of a brain, it is deprived of its expression as that particular mind. Another metaphor, far from original, but nonetheless useful, is that of the TV set. The TV set is proximally causative of the phenomena that appears on the screen: damage the electronic circuitry, and the picture's gone, or at any rate distorted—true enough. But the TV set is only mediative; it does not give rise to the programme you watch.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹² George Makari, *Soul Machine: The Invention of the Modern Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2015), p. xvi, p. 511.

⁸¹³ See Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Superhumanities: Historical Precedents, Moral Objections, New Realities* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2022), chapters two and three for an in-depth exegesis of these themes.

⁸¹⁴ For an in-depth overview of an innovative range of perspectives providing an alternative to the standard model of construing mind as an epiphenomenon of brain, see the following: Edward F. Kelly et al. (eds.), *Irreducible Mind: Towards a Psychology for the 21st Century* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Edward F. Kelly et al. (eds.), *Beyond Physicalism: Towards Reconciliation of Science and Spirituality* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); Edward F. Kelly & Paul Marshall (eds.), *Consciousness Unbound: Liberating Mind from the Tyranny of Materialism* (New York: Roman & Littlefield, 2021).

⁸¹⁵ Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 465 n.15.

It is from within the midst of these wider cultural conversations and dissensions that we can begin to view theoretical developments in post-Bionian psychoanalysis as constituting *a memoir of the future* through which we can discern the glimmers of the esoteric tacitly reconstituted and reformulated under the aegis of the psychoanalytic. This kind of ‘oneiric’ approach to theory formation, which tends towards a creative *bricolage* of the evidential, the speculative, and perhaps even the prescient, are, as Bion conjectured, ‘... more like a guess or a “hunch,” than anything one could call evidence or fact. But [they] may be a fact one day’.⁸¹⁶

At its inception psychoanalysis set itself the task of applying a hermeneutics of suspicion to those realms of human experience that had previously been subject to religious, philosophical and spiritual modes of interpretation. This project (whose effects were to be simultaneously emancipatory, reductive, and deconstructive in terms of their consequences) were given exemplary expression in the epigraph to Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899): ‘If I cannot bend those above, I will stir the underworld’ (Virgil, *Aeneid*). The history of psychoanalysis over the next century could be thought of as both a working out and a working through of the various implications and permutations arising from this hermeneutic trajectory. However, there are reasons to suppose that these dynamics of descent have become subject in more recent times to a process of reversal, or *enantiodromia*, whereby some Jungians have been increasingly drawn to earth (in the form of the various Jungian developmental schools), while analysts such as Bion, Grotstein and Michael Eigen have, so to speak, been ‘ascending to heaven’.⁸¹⁷ As we have seen, Grotstein’s writings, in particular,

⁸¹⁶ W.R. Bion, 1974, Rio de Janeiro (CWB: VIII, p. 90).

⁸¹⁷ Ann Alvarez, cited in Joann Culbert-Koehn, ‘Where is James Grotstein? Response to James Grotstein,’ *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 46 (1998), p. 73. ‘*Enantiodromia*: [Jung] applied the term to the emergence of unconscious opposites in relation to the points of view held or expressed by consciousness. If an extreme, one-sided tendency dominates conscious life, in time an equally powerful counter-position is built up in the psyche,’ Samuels et al., *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis*, p. 53.

provide an exemplary instance of this Neo-platonic reversion to a psychoanalytic heavenly ascent.

This thesis has outlined an evidential basis for construing the presence of esoteric traces within psychoanalysis, the activities of which it has sought to theorise under the aegis of an Orphic trajectory spanning the pre-history of psychoanalysis through to its present. It has identified processes of inscription and erasure (operative as a form of historiographical and cultural encryption) that it argues have come over time to characterise relations between Western esoteric currents and psychoanalysis. These ‘traces’ have been theorised as a trans-generationally transmitted *enigmatic signifiers*, whose existence can be inferred from the presence of a ‘decentred’ psychoanalytic subject dialectically conjoined to its enigmatic (esoteric) Other. The potentially destabilising effects of these ‘traces’ are construed to be the symptomatic expression of an underlying conflict arising out of the superimposition of esoteric and materialistic world views into the substantive fabric of psychoanalytic metapsychology. To the extent that this construction—or perhaps, better, ‘retrieval’—of an Orphic trajectory within psychoanalysis constitutes a disruption to the assumptions of a secularised psychoanalytic historiography, these traces of the esoteric might also be thought of as conceptual *hieroglyphs*, the ongoing decipherment of which possesses the potential to contribute to future developments in psychoanalytic theory. In conclusion, some of the forms that these developments could potentially take will now be briefly adumbrated.

As Thomas Rabeyron has observed, ‘Psi studies are particularly interesting because whatever the reaction to the question “does psi exist? (Bem and Honorton, 1994), their results affect

the whole of psychology’.⁸¹⁸ Rabeyron’s insight equally applies to the impact of such findings upon psychoanalysis. This has been acknowledged by Philip Bromberg, as can be adduced from his assertion that Elizabeth Mayer’s *Extraordinary Knowing* (2007) ‘could well hold the future of psychoanalysis between its covers’.⁸¹⁹ As we initially saw in chapter one, Mayer proposed that the future of psychoanalytic research into the more subtle modalities of non-verbal communication could potentially lie in the findings gleaned from empirical research into psi phenomena, thereby tacitly aligning her own researches into ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology’ with those of Ferenczi, Severn and Fodor as discussed in chapter four. Furthermore, a case has been put forward in chapter five contending that post-Bionian psychoanalysis tacitly pioneered the use of the ganzfeld state (or its phenomenological equivalent) as a clinical technique for enhancing access to unconscious processes under the aegis of the Bionian concept of *reverie*. Moreover, arguments for the covert presence of theurgic elements in Bionian psychoanalysis have also been advanced. Notably, Sean McGrath has construed the presence of an existential overlap between psychoanalysis and Gnosticism with regards to their comparative world-views.⁸²⁰ I would now like to extend McGrath’s observation by augmenting it with a remark made by Ioan Couliano, in which the latter asserts:

It should be noticed from the beginning that *all* Gnostic systems, without exception, appear as transformations of one another and therefore can be said to be part of a

⁸¹⁸ Thomas Rabeyron, ‘Why Most Research Findings About Psi are False: The Replicability Crisis, the Psi Paradox and the myth of Sisyphus,’ *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020), p. 7.

⁸¹⁹ Philip M. Bromberg, *The Shadow of the Tsunami and the Growth of the Relational Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 137. See also Philip M. Bromberg, ‘Stumbling Along and Hanging In: If This Be Technique, Make the Most of It!,’ *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 32 (2012), pp. 11-13.

⁸²⁰ Sean J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 183. However, it is important to read McGrath’s more ‘tragic’ reading of a gnostically-inflected Freudian subject in conjunction with DeConick’s more positive appraisal of Gnosticism, which includes a capacity to ‘heal’ primal existential traumas by means of ‘ecstatic ascents into transcendental realms,’ April D. DeConick, *The Gnostic New Age* (New York: Columbia Press, 2016), p. 192.

larger ‘ideal object,’ whose possibilities are being explored by human minds at all times, regardless of time and space.⁸²¹

When applied to the topics addressed in this thesis, Couliano’s speculations challenge the axioms of a naively progressivist psychoanalytic historiography, and replace these instead with a more historically sophisticated reading in which the various ‘schools’ of psychoanalysis are conceptualised as inhabiting the secularised and immantized aspect of a more ancient, expansive and multivalent ‘ideal object,’ many of whose possibilities remain as thus far unexplored, but regarding whose potentialities a comparatively small number of psychoanalysts have begun to explore. It is under the aegis of this Gnostic ‘ideal object’ that this thesis has sought to re-instantiate relations between the psychoanalytic and the esoteric. Jason Josephson-Storm has astutely observed that ‘... most of what gets classified as contemporary esotericism or occultism came into being as an attempt to repair the rupture between religion and science’.⁸²² Consequently, attempts to forge a hybrid *tertium quid* in the guise of a revitalised ‘psychoanalytic parapsychology’ or, better still, a ‘parapsychological psychoanalysis,’ are to be expected. Thomas Rabeyron has already been instrumental in establishing a ‘clinical service specialising in anomalous experiences’ that not only undertakes innovative research into this area but which has also developed pioneering clinical techniques for working with anomalous experiences in a psychotherapeutic setting.⁸²³ Elizabeth Mayer’s account of the personal and professional costs accruing from a cultural milieu that both tacitly and more explicitly fosters ‘occult disavowal’ is both heartfelt and has

⁸²¹ Ioan P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (San Francisco CA: Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 62-63.

⁸²² Jason Ā. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (London: University of Chicago, 2017), p. 15.

⁸²³ Thomas Rabeyron & Tianna Loose, ‘Anomalous Experiences, Trauma, and Symbolisation Processes at the Frontiers between Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Neurosciences,’ *Frontiers in Psychology* 6: art. 1926 (2015), p. 1.

deep implications with regards to future developments in psychoanalytic theory and practice.⁸²⁴ As Adam Phillips astutely remarked during the course of an interview with Mayer that she conducted as part of the research for her book:

But just consider it—the Oedipal taboo was nothing. Compared to the taboo invoked by this quality of connectedness—now *there's* a taboo. It suggests a capacity for connection that's far more fearful in implication than Oedipal love. It's far deeper, far more radical. Where are the boundaries? Where's Freud's concept of ego? It's overwhelming. Fascinating and full of promise but overwhelming.⁸²⁵

Jeffrey Kripal has identified psychoanalysis as constituting—amongst other things—a 'spiritual map,' a claim that is congruent with more recent accounts of psychoanalysis as traversing a secularised mystical trajectory possessing its own genealogical roster of 'psychoanalytic mystics'.⁸²⁶ Hence, we encounter a theoretical overlap conjoining Kripal's investigations into the *supernormal* (a term originally coined by Frederic Myers in 1885) with Grotstein's theorisation of a post-Bionian psychoanalysis in which the effects associated with transformations in O can—at times—possess an explicitly preternatural inflection. Both of these endeavours exemplify in their respective fields a shared commitment to a dual aspect monist view of reality that may itself be construed to be inherently *paraconceptual* with regards to its de-structuring of the subject-object relationship. The ensuing implications arising out of these developments have led Kripal to propose a re-calibration of the role of the humanities vis-à-vis the sciences, whilst advocating for a re-visioning of '... the humanities

⁸²⁴ See Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*, pp. 25-38.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁸²⁶ Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 96; Dan Merkur, *Explorations of the Psychoanalytic Mystics* (New York: Rodopi, 2010).

as *the study of consciousness coded in culture*,’ an aspiration which is in congruence with the *tertium quid* proclivities of a post-Bionian psychoanalysis.⁸²⁷

We saw at the outset of this thesis how the scientific ambitions that accompanied the instantiation of psychoanalysis resulted instead in what has appositely been described as the *dream of a science*.⁸²⁸ However, as we have seen thereafter, the ensuing derailment of a naïve empiricism did not ultimately militate against the evolution of a version of psychoanalysis that advocated for the development of a ‘science’ of the subjective, of the oneiric and, indeed, of the ‘esoteric’ and the ‘mystical’.

⁸²⁷ Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Flip: epiphanies of mind and the future of knowledge* (New York: Bellevue Press, 2019), p. 45. See also Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Superhumanities: Historical Precedents, Moral Objections, New Realities* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2022), pp. 63-67.

⁸²⁸ Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology: The Dream of a Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

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