John BOYLE

Before and after Science: Esoteric Traces in the Formation of the Freudian Psychoanalytic Subject

ABSTRACT: This paper argues that traces of the Western esoteric traditions can be found within Freudian psychoanalysis and proposes that the significance of such traces for the development of a specifically psychoanalytic understanding of the human subject has thus far been largely neglected. A critical-realist hauntology is proposed to act as the transmissive milieu for the persistence of such traces. The paper then provides a brief introduction to Western esotericism as an academic discipline prior to turning its attention to the conceptual metaphor of 'trace' as a means of articulating relations between esotericism and psychoanalysis at the latter's inception. The paper goes on to adumbrate a complex conceptual matrix conjoining Freudian psychoanalysis to fin de siècle occultism, psychical research, telepathy and the Jewish Kabbalah. The paper concludes by drawing attention to the persistence of esoteric traces in contemporary psychoanalysis and reflects on the synergistic potential of psychoanalytic ideas for the academic study of Western esotericism.

KEYWORDS: Freud, psychoanalysis, Western esotericism, occultism, telepathy, Kabbalah

John BOYLE is a part-time doctoral candidate with the Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex. He has completed clinical MSc degrees in Integrative and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, and is registered with the UKCP as a psychotherapist and clinical supervisor. He also has a MA in Western Esotericism from the University of Exeter. He is employed full-time as a community forensic practitioner in Northern Ireland and has previously published papers in journals such as the *British Journal of Psychotherapy* and *American Imago.*

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.
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> Bertrand Méheust, *Le Défi du magnetisme*[1]

As Derrida has observed, archives are invariably haunted by that which they attempt to exclude (Derrida 1998). This 'haunting' can at times take on a rather more literal quality than one might expect amidst the various hermeneutic occlusions that feature within contemporary cultural theory.[2] Under such circumstances it may be helpful both to extend and to reconfigure the conceptual metaphors of *haunting* and *spectrality,* so as to include within their purview the interrogation of our disciplinary attempts to police the parameters of our academically permissible *possible real* (Ricoeur) (Blanco & Peeren 2013, 1).[3] While proximate notions of the *spectral* originate in Derrida's engagement with psychoanalysis and Marxism, its more distant antecedents are to be found disseminated across a diverse range of more esoteric sources, including those of Romanticism, the Gothic, Spiritualism and fin de siècle psychology as exemplified via a reticulated series of metaphors that emerged out of the then newly evolving media of

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

[2] For an exemplary illustration of what is meant by this process of 'occlusion,' see Roseneil 2009, 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' & 'haunting,' asserts that this kind of terminology was not actually employed by any of the research participants. Yet on 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 & 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 critical of what is an otherwise excellent paper. Rather, it is proposed that such instances can be viewed as indices of a wider academic cultural milieu policed by conceptual demarcatory processes, through which the academic 'possible real' is protected from the destabilising effects of a more 'spectral' infiltration as described by Méheust in the epigraph.

[3] It has been observed that '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 & wants to be seen,' (Phillips 1995, 19).

telegraphy, photography and cinema (Blanco & Peeren 2013, 2-19). Derrida's deployment of the *spectral* is avowedly indebted to Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic investigations into the role of the *phantom* as a vehicle for the transgenerational transmission of traumas that have subsequently become *encrypted* (see Abraham & Torok 1986; 1994). However, while *phantoms* denote the covert instantiation of a "lie about the past," *spectres* seek to establish an orientation "towards a still unformulated future"(Blanco & Peeren 2013, 58). It is proposed that both of these facets of the hauntological imagination feature as recurrent motifs within the *witch* metapsychology of the decentred Freudian subject 'haunted' by *traces* of its occluded, esoteric *other*.[4] Consequently, a modified 'hauntological' historiography is applied throughout this paper as the 'medium' through which the convergence of 'occultism' with 'psychoanalysis' can be resurrected and given a voice.[5] Moreover, it is argued that this imbrication of the occult with the ideals of (post) Enlightenment Science served both to preserve and to negate (in the Hegelian sense of 'sublation') these culturally encoded *hieroglyphs of the esoteric* within the main body of the Freudian ('*witch*') metapsychology.[6] In this regard, it can be useful to reconfigure both psychoanalysis and Western esotericism as being *paraconceptual* in terms of their shared orientation towards questions of boundary demarcation as applied across their respective disciplines.[7]

While psychoanalysis is commonly construed to be an inherently secular endeavour, the presence of esoteric, mystical and occult motifs active at its inception and recurrent throughout its ensuing history has been occasionally acknowledged albeit less frequently elaborated upon (see Eigen 2001).[8] Indeed, this peripheral 'haunting' of the esoteric at the

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[4] My usage of the term 'haunting' in this context is indebted to that of Avery Gordon's: '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,' (Gordon 1997 cited in Frosh 2013, 2).

[5] See Ethan 2017 & Hayward 2007. The historiographical approach adopted in this paper is indebted to both of these texts.

[6] '...the Freudian uncanny is a function of *enlightenment*,' (Castle 1995, 7). On the origins of Freud's 'witch meta-psychology,' see Bonomi 2015, 208-232. See also Duffy (2020) for an intriguing interpretation of the role played by the witch trial literature in the formation of early Freudian psychoanalysis.

[7] The term *paraconceptual* is taken from the work of the conceptual artist Susan Hiller (1940-2019): 'Just to the side of Conceptualism & 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,' (Kokoli 2011, 144).

[8] Even so, a notable resurgence of interest in relations between psychoanalysis & parapsychological phenomena has been more recently remarked upon, see Reichbart 2019,

boundaries of psychoanalysis can be thought of as the emblematic expression of the liminal role commonly assigned both to psychoanalysis and to the academic study of esotericism within institutional and academic settings more generally.[9] In a previous paper, I argued for the presence of esoteric traces in the writings of three major contemporary psychoanalytic theorists (Boyle 2016, 99-119). The present study seeks to contextualise this previous account by providing a more detailed exposition of its specifically Freudian provenance, as situated within its associated *fin de siècle* 'occult' milieu.

While the Kabbalistic and Derridean resonances generated by the rubric of 'trace' tacitly connote 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 subject to processes of inscription and erasure (Freud 1991, 427-434).[10] It is proposed that this composite notion of 'trace' can serve to articulate the nature of relations between the esoteric and the psychoanalytic as set out in this paper. This conceptual metaphor is further extended to denote such 'traces' as the vehicle for the transgenerational transmission and ensuing *encryption* of psychoanalytically heterodox ideas:

> [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 (Hinton 2009, 185).[11]

As we shall see, there is reason to suppose that the significance of 19th Century psychical research in particular (and of 'esoteric' currents more generally) for the development of a specifically psychoanalytic understanding of the 'decentred' human subject has itself been the subject of such processes throughout the course of psychoanalytic history.[12] However, before we move on to consider this matter in more detail, it will

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133-137 for a very helpful summary of work in this area. However, as shall be highlighted subsequently, both 'repression' of & 'research' into this topic has long co-existed within psychoanalysis, albeit within a state of virtual 'disavowal' from each other. See Farrell 1983, 71-81 & Calvesi 1983, 387-402 for more on these themes.

[9] "The paranormal is marginalised because it *is* the marginal": Kripal 2014, 244. For more on this topic as applied to research into the paranormal, see Hansen 2001. See also Hanegraaff 2005, 225-254.

[10] See also Wolfson 2002, 475-514; Derrida 2001, 246-291.

[11] See also Jean Laplanche, 'The Theory of Seduction and the Problem of the Other,' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 78 (1997), pp. 653-666.

[12] For notable exceptions to this assertion see, for example, Ellenberger 1994; Owen 2004); Hayward 2007.

be helpful to preface this with a very brief overview of some of the main developments in the academic study of Western esotericism in order to properly contextualise this largely neglected genealogy of the 'occult' in psychoanalysis.[13]

A very brief introduction to Western esotericism

It is impossible within the limitations of the present paper 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 this rapidly evolving specialism will have to suffice.[14]

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 Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866?-1949) and the founder of analytical psychology, C. G. Jung (1875-1961). Studies in contemporary esotericism have sought to extend

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[13] The notion of 'occultism' was poorly articulated and heterogeneously misapplied throughout the early history of psychoanalysis, and so came to encompass a wide & disparate range of ostensibly 'anomalous' phenomena, including telepathy, astrology, theosophy, animal magnetism & clairvoyance. See Gyimesi 2017a, 3-8 for more on this topic.

[14] For useful historiographical and methodological overviews, see: Goodrick-Clarke 2008; Rudbøg 2013; Hanegraaff 2012, 2013. 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 into the debates concerning the comparative value of the respective approaches utilised to demarcate the academic study of the esoteric, other than to remark that each of these scholarly 'schools' or orientations comes freighted with its own particular matrix of methodological, ideological & ontological baggage, whose presence necessarily serves both to circumscribe & to define-at least to some degree-the subject of their investigations.

these investigations by augmenting traditional historiographical approaches with a range of sociological, psychological and critical methodologies adapted to enhance our understanding of the multi-faceted role of the esoteric within historical and contemporary cultures (See Asprem & Kennet 2014).

It has been 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 conjoin philosophers such as Plato (427-347 BC) and Plotinus (204-270 AD) to mythologized figures such as Hermes Trismegistus. However, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, Protestant German theologians set out to undermine this narrative as part of a polemically-driven agenda to 'purify' Christian teaching from the sources of 'pagan' contamination. It was this attempted exorcism of 'pagan influences' that contributed to the ancillary creation of a heterogeneous category of the excluded 'other,' which came in time to provide the historiographical 'substrate' for the academic field now known as "Western esotericism." Following the Enlightenment, notions 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.[15] However, the historically situated nature of western esotericism also means that attempts to provide a precise definition remain problematic to the degree that they entail the foreclosure of an open-ended historiographical horizon.[16] More 'constructivist' approaches have found a home in discourse analysis.[17] However, whilst such methodologies have the potential to act as bracing 'antidotes' to the more extreme or naive variants of what has come to be known as 'religionism,' such radically 'anti-essentialist' strategies concurrently run the risk-if too enthusiastically applied-of both defining out of existence the very *topoi* that they initially set out to investigate, whilst simultaneously reconfiguring the historiographical data via the application of a methodologically-generated 'ideological filter.'[18] In the estimation of one commentator:

> ...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),

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[15] See Hanegraaff 2012a for the definitive account of this thesis.

[16] Hanegraaff 2013, 258.

[17] For an excellent overview of the various meanings of discourse analysis as applied to the study of esotericism, see Granholm 2013, 46-69.

[18] Hanegraaff 2013b, 254-255 & 268 n. 32; Magee 2016, p. xx. For an exemplary illustration of a discourse analysis approach applied to esoteric *topoi,* see von Stuckrad 2015. In brief, Hanegraaff associates 'religionism' with the legacy of Mircea Eliade, Perennialism & the notion of religion as a *sui generis* phenomenon-see Hanegraaff 2012a, 127 n. 174.

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 (Kripal 2010, 254-255).

In order to avoid the excesses of a too stringent 'reductionism,' in tandem with the 'grand narratives' approach frequently ascribed to 'Perennialist' schools of thought, the present paper is orientated within a 'critical realist' frame of reference, in which the perspectives opened up by terms such as 'ontology,' 'ideology,' 'culture' and 'history' are construed to be omnipresent and reflexively interdependent (Schilbrack 2010, 1112-1138).[19] Moreover, it presumes that such terms are themselves subject to reciprocal processes of neurological *and* cultural mediation, in accordance with the findings of transdisciplinary approaches such as *neurotheology*.[20]

While definitions of Western esotericism have been philosophically situated along a continuum ranging from 'realism' through to 'nominalism,' (Hanegraaff 2013b, 258),[21] the first widely accepted scholarly definition of the term was formulated by the French esoteric scholar Antoine Faivre in 1992.[22] 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

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[19] See especially 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' (1132).

[20] At its simplest, *neurotheology* can be thought of as the application of the findings from neurological research to inform our understanding of religious experience-see Newberg 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' (84-85). See also d'Aquili & Newberg 1999.

[21] For a cogent defence of the use of the term 'Western esotericism' within a global context see also Hanegraaff 2015.

[22] For a helpful overview of Faivre's contribution to the study of Western esotericism, see McCalla 2001, 435-450.

intrinsic characteristics, he set forth two further non-intrinsic characteristics, which he termed rituals of transmission and the practice of concordance (see Faivre & Needleman 1992; Faivre 1994). 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" (Faivre 1998, 2). While Faivre's definition has been subject to various criticisms since this time (indeed, he himself was subsequently to adopt the tenets of 'methodological agnosticism'),[23] his account is nonetheless accepted by most Western esoteric scholars to have set the terms of reference against which many of the ensuing debates around questions of definition and methodology have subsequently occurred.

While Faivre's approach has fallen out of favour in more recent times, Glenn Alexander Magee has sought to revive his approach through revitalising its original frame of reference as a means of extending its potential theoretical reach. 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 (2016, xxx). Magee considers his approach as steering a judicious course between the binary polarities of methodological agnosticism and the so-called 'religionism' commonly ascribed to Perennialist schools of thought. He does so, in part, by reframing these debates in terms of the 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'. 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"(Magee 2016, xxxiii, n. 28).

'A dead king or an unborn god': demarcatory conflicts in the formation of the psychoanalytic 'occult' — [24]

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 (Ellenberger 1994, 110-181). Henri Ellenberger has termed those schools of psychology that prefigured the rise

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[23] See Hanegraaff 2012a, 334ff. for a more detailed account of these criticisms.
[24] von Hofmannsthal cited in Roudinesco 2016, 92.

of psychoanalysis as 'the First Dynamic Psychiatry,' chronologically situating it between the years of 1775-1900 and depicting its geographical scope as being international in terms of its reach. 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 (Ellenberger 1994, 110-181).[25] 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 prominence.

The complex interplay of synergistic, ambivalent, and agonistic dynamics that typified relations between the First Dynamic Psychiatry and its successors is further 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 (Kuhn 2017, 5-6; 26-28; 294).[26] 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 as it has been invoked to account for normal and abnormal phenomena only, and does not lay its supporters open to the implication of belief in supernormal happenings (cited in Gyimesi 2009, 467).[27]

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

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[25] See also Haule 1984, 638.

[26] However, Kuhn dates the actual introduction of 'Freud' & 'psychoanalysis' to the membership for *The Society for Psychical Research* to 1909, noting that this initial confusion took the form of a misreading in which Breuer, Freud & 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 & Myers himself — see Hamilton 2009, 190.

[27] 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' subject by its occluded 'esoteric' *other*.

subliminal self initially developed by Myers and subsequently taken forward in the writings of his friend and colleague, William James (See Taylor 1996; Knapp 2017).

It is notable in this regard that Freud chose to publish his first major theorisation of the unconscious in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (Freud 1958 [1912], 255-66)[28] While the hypothesis that Freud construed his conceptualisation of a specifically psychoanalytic unconscious to be in tacit competition with Myer's pre-existing theorisation of the *subliminal self* remains subject to debate, it is nonetheless evident that disciplinary anxieties regarding boundary disputes remained prominent throughout the professional politics of this period (Gyimesi 2009):

> 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 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 (Pilard 2018, 67).

Such disagreements constituted but one variant of more longstanding attempts to delegitimize the 'nightside' (*Nachtseite*) 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.[29]

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

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[28] 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 2017, 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 (Kuhn 2017, 327-328).

[29] See Keeley 2001, 767-791; Kuhn 2017, 327-330; Thurschwell 2001, 40-41. On the role of the 'nightside' in German Romantic psychology & the origins of Jungian analytical psychology, see Hanegraaff 2012a, 262-264 & 285-289.

necessarily difficult to determine-concurrently motivated by a disavowed melange of fears, anxieties and repressions of a more fundamentally irrational nature:[30]

> ...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 (Wolffram 2009, 30, n. 54).

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 (see Hayward 2007, 63).

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.[31] Although Freud made scant reference to these earlier developments in his own writings, the milieu of Charcot's Saltpetriere 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 (see Reichbart 2019, 82).[32] This confluence of 'nightside' currents evoked 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,

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[30] 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 cited in Sommer 2016, 114).

[31] See Raia 2019 for an excellent account of these developments.

[32] For a detailed historical account of the alleged associations between hypnotic trance & paranormal phenomena, see Dingwall (ed.) 1968. A search of the CD-Rom catalogue of Freud's library returned twenty-three books/articles dealing with 'animal magnetism' & five books/articles dealing with 'mesmerism.' A total of forty-seven books/articles on hypnotism (excluding items beginning with 'hypnotism &...') were also identified: see J. Davies & Fichtner 2006. Notably, as early as 1887, Freud alluded 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 in a manner that is arguably reminiscent of the *subliminal self* of Myers-see Solms 1990, 365-366.

accompanied by a concomitant fear of 'contamination' should the unwary visitant draw too close to the flame (See Rabeyron & Evrard 2012, 108).

However, in order to contextualise these developments more thoroughly, it will be necessary to embark on 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' (See Whitebook 2017; Roudinesco 2016).

'A gnosis of symbols': the role of the Mesmeric 'Nightside' in the formation of the Freudian psychoanalytic subject [33]

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 traditions, he can also be construed as an exemplar of the 'dark Enlightenment' (Whitebook 2017, 10-12; Roudinesco 2016, 215-232 & 71. [34] 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"(Whitebook 2017, 11). Viewed from such a 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* which sought to transcend a polarised understanding of Romantic and Enlightenment discourses:

> 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

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[33] 'When psychoanalysis "forgets" its own historicity, that is, its internal relation to conflicts of power & position, it becomes either a mechanism of drives, a dogmatism of discourse, or a gnosis of symbols,' (de Certeau 1986, 10).

[34] On the topic of Freud's 'positivism,' and its limitations, see Whitebook 2017, 398-399. In the estimation of Cornelius Castoriadis, Freud's "...scientific mirage was a vital and even fertile illusion," cited in Whitebook 2017, 96. On the subliminal 'influence' of Roman Catholicism on Freud, see Vitz 1988.

understanding for those who participated in it (Stuckrad 2015, 69).

This underlying imbrication of ostensibly divergent intellectual currents can be thought of as serving an apotropaic purpose, insofar as the 'irrational' elements thereby encountered 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*.[35]

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 true that his private views on such topics could be at considerable variance with his more public avowals of an explanatory reductionism (See Vitz 1988, 157).[36] 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 repressed attraction towards the 'occult' (Roudinesco 2016, 275).[37] Freud maintained a lucid awareness of his own ambivalence on the matter of publishing on such topics (Reichbart 2019, 108).[38] Indeed, his insights into this issue could be recruited to support the hypothesis that his motives for embarking upon his 1912 paper on the unconscious not only constituted a theoretical

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[35] See, for example, Jones 1957, 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.

[36] See also Whitebook 2017, 159 for an account of Loewald's seminal distinction between Freud's 'official' & 'unofficial' positions.

[37] Notably, Freud identified thought-transference as being one of only two themes (the second being countertransference) that 'always discomposed' him-see Roazen 1975, 232.

[38] 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 mislay 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 Hewitt 2014), 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 2019, 107. This sense of Freud's underlying ambivalence is further reinforced when we consider that he could never quite bring himself to pay his membership dues to the Society for Psychical Research-see Luckhurst 1999, 68, n.39.

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] of occultism* (See Jung 1983, 173). Otto Rank adumbrated on this theme as follows:

> 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 (Rank cited in Nelson 2001, 128-129).

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 into the 'nightside' phenomenon of telepathy (Roudinesco 2016, 211). 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 invoked 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 (Roudinesco 2016, 216.

However, it remains a matter of debate as to what extent this latter transformation was ever actually 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.[39] 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, 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 (Masson 1985, 227.[40]

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 (see Prokhoris 1995 33-34; Bishop 2009, 9-32).[41] 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 in the scholarly literature (Vitz 1988, 148 & 101-171; Duffy 2020).[42] 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 (Roudinesco 2016, 39-40.[43] 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 (Vitz 1988, 110-112; Roudinesco 2016, 39).

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[39] 'I propose that Freud had neurotic fantasies about the Devil & that at some time, whilst fantasizing, he concluded a pact' (Vitz 1988, 155).

[40] See also Duffy 2020, 16-17ff for an in-depth explication of this passage & its ensuing implications for the early development of psychoanalytic theory & practice.

[41] 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 Bair 2004, 8.

[42] On Freud's deployment of & indebtedness to Goethe's *Faust,* see especially Prokhoris 1995.

[43] 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 2017, 116. For a useful compilation of Freud's writings on cocaine, see Carter 2011. On the role of drugs in occultism, see Merkur 2015, 672-680.

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 respect to the future of psychoanalysis (See Rabeyron & Evrard 2012; Keve 2015). It is thus that we find how "[i]n psychoanalysis the supernatural returns as the erotic"(Phillips 1995, 23 & 19; Thurschwell 2001, 118).

Having touched briefly on some of the wider contextual issues, we can now move on to the more immediate task of constellating a series of esoterically-inflected *topoi* centred round two particular themes, namely: the role played by psychical research in the history of psychoanalysis as exemplified by Freud's studies into telepathy; and the influence of the Jewish Kabbalistic traditions upon the formation of a specifically psychoanalytic hermeneutics.

'Before and After Science:' Freud and Psychical Research [44]

> 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) (Jones 1957, 419).[45]

Recent studies have tended to present nineteenth-century psychical research as an emergent discipline inhabiting a hybrid realm conjoining literature, philosophy and the nascent discipline of psychology to empirical

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[44] 'Before & After Science' (2002) is the title of an essay by the conceptual artist Susan Hiller (1940-2019) in which she explores the imbrication of Freudian psychoanalysis with the phenomenon of telepathy-see Kokoli 2008, 239-244. It is, of course, also the title of an eponymous album (1977) by Brian Eno.

[45] 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 choose no other field of work, in spite of all difficulties" (cited in Fodor 1971, 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 Mr Carrington.

science (Wolffram 2009, 27.[46] It is from within the tensional matrix created by these disparate disciplines that we can begin to discern the trajectory of a materialist ideology active in both French and German fin-de-siècle psychology, which 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.[47]

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.' However, by the mid 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 tenets of which tended towards more naturalistic modes of explanation.[48] This, in turn, contributed to a retreat from the animist paradigm hitherto characteristic of German psychical research, resulting in a compensatory shift towards a materialistically-oriented psychology utilised to establish a series of 'reductive' explanations for paranormal phenomena (Wolffram 2009, 71, 84). The ensuing process of genealogical occlusion has been aptly summarised as follows:

> 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

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[46] Other useful histories of psychical research drawn upon in the following pages include Treitel 2004 & Oppenheim 1985.

[47] For German developments, see Wolffram 2009, 30 n. 54; 50. For a very helpful overview of the French *psychologie Physiologique* (as well as its counter-currents in French psychiatry), see Raia 2019, 181ff.

[48] "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 & its overall orientation was antipathetic to the legacy of Friedrich Schelling & the Romantic form of science known as *Naturphilosophie*. Arguably, 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,' (Wolffram 2009, 38-39).

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 (Thurschwell 2001, 107).

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 that separated these respective disciplines were especially permeable. In his 1899 masterpiece *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud made a number of laudatory remarks concerning the 'transcendental psychologist,' Carl du Prel.[49] 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 pragmatically-oriented facsimile of this deeper source of subjectivity. To this extent, then, we might legitimately adduce a complex interplay of tensions conjoining du Prel's 'transcendental subject' and Myers' 'subliminal self' to the immanentising proclivities of the Freudian psychoanalytic 'subject' (See Sommer 2009, 59-68). 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 consequence of his interest in hypnotism), Freud's most sympathetically-inclined early readers were initially to be found amongst the German psychical researchers (Treitel 2004, 48; 71-72).[50] Furthermore, 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), which subsequently formed

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[49] 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 2004, 48). For more on Freud's usage of du Prel's ideas (& on du Prel's mystical proclivities), see Storm-Peterson 2017, 179-180 & 189-191.

[50] See also Marinelli & Mayer (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 Grubrich-Simitis 2004, 30.

the inspiration for Freud's celebrated paper, 'Psychoanalytic notes on an autobiographical account of a case of paranoia' (1911) (Treitel 2004, 71-72).[51] 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 (Jones 1957, 425).[52] From his initial decision to diverge in *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) from Breuer's conceptualisation of hypnoid states, through to his lengthy refutations of ideas concerning the 'splitting of consciousness' ('A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis' in 1912; 'The Unconscious' in 1915), 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 (See Luckhurst 1999, 58).[53]

We have 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.'[54] Since it is in Freud's papers on telepathy that we find his

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[51] 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 2001, 126-129 & Schreber 2000 [1903]. See also Obeyesekere 2012, 62-74. Approaching Schreber's memoir from an anthropological context, 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.

[52] See also Hinshelwood 1995.

[53] On Freud's divergence from the alternate conscious tradition, see Crabtree 1993, 351-360.

[54] 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" (Treitel 2004, 46). This was around the same time 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 2018, 66. See also Sommer (2016), for a lucid discussion as to why the 'will to believe' & the 'will to disbelieve' in the existence of paranormal phenomena can both in their respective ways prove equally problematic to the researcher.

most sustained expression of these tensions, it is to these papers that we shall now turn.

It is outside my current remit to provide an exhaustive account of Freud's views on the phenomenon of telepathy and its place in psychoanalytic theory (See Devereux (ed.) 1974). 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 *Telepathy* to cover all cases of impressions received at a distance" (Luckhurst 2002, 60). 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* (Kripal 2010, 81). 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 (Thurschwell 2001, 14). 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 (Kripal 2010, 81).[55] It was (in parallel with the Freudian concept of the 'transference') closely conjoined to the experience of the erotic: "Love is a kind of exalted, but unspecialised telepathy" (Myers, *Human Personality*, 1903, vol. II, 282 cited in Kripal 2010, 85). It was the mesmeric phenomenon of the *rapport* that constituted the conceptual matrix for both telepathy and transference, each of which can thus be traced to common ancestral origin (Kuhn 2017, 54-55).[56]

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[55] For an excellent overview of Myers' theory of the *subliminal self,* see Raia 2019, 141-204.

[56] 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 De Saussure 1943, 199). It was roughly during this same period that Joseph Philippe Deleuze (1753-1835) observed how both the magnetizer & his subject could experience sexual feelings as a consequence of the effects of the rapport- see Crabtree 2008, 563.

Marked parallels have been drawn between Freud's description of 'telepathy' (*Gedankenübertragung*) and the linked concepts of 'transference' (*Ubertragung*)/ 'countertransference' (*Gegenübertragung*) , leading one commentator to describe the former as "an extreme, rebellious form of transference" (Lana Lin cited in Zeavin 2018, 57). 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 (Luckhurst 2001, 275).[57]

The phenomenon of transference evolved out of a wide cultural matrix in which mesmerism, hypnotic suggestion and telepathic transfer feature as constitutive elements integral to the nascent conceptualization of the therapeutic rapport (Luckhurst 2001, 276).[58] Freud conducted his own experiments into telepathy with his colleague Sandor Ferenczi and his daughter Anna, the success of which came to have a "persuasive power" sufficient to relegate "diplomatic considerations…to…a back seat", much to Ernest Jones' chagrin (Gay 1989, 445). Freud also participated in at least two telepathic séances that were held in his home and at his institute over a brief period in 1913 (Roazen 1975, 237; Zeavin 2018, 57-58).[59] 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

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[57] The citations from Freud in this extract are taken from 'The Dynamics of Transference' (1912) & *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899).

[58] There is evidence to suggest that as early as 1888 Freud was aware of the imbrication of the phenomenon of 'trance' with that of 'telepathy' via the then-famous experiment of Babinski with Charcot-see Solms 1989, 401-403. See also Raia 2019, 179-186.

[59] Perhaps unsurprisingly, we find that "All records of the day that the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society spent with the mediums are missing," (Zeavin 2018, 58).

lend support to the cause of telepathy through psychoanalysis"(Evrard, Massicotte & Rabeyron 2017, 13). [60]

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 in common an aspiration towards establishing their scientific credentials (Jones 1957; Phillips 1995). 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 observed in this same paper that the dream-state could potentially be conducive for the reception of telepathic communications (Freud (1922) in Devereux 1974). [61] Freud was 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. [62] 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 (Ellenberger 1994, 534). 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

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[60] 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 much interest to Freud comparative to the opportunities provided by his excursions into telepathy as the means to further psychoanalytic theorising.

[61] This volume consists of a series of very useful primary sources addressing the topic of psychoanalysis & 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 & book excerpts, more recent commentators, such as Evrard et al. (2017) & Reichbart (2019) have tended to focus upon the following four key texts: 'Psychoanalysis & Telepathy' SE 18 (1921), 177-193; 'Dreams & Telepathy,' SE 18 (1922), 197-220; 'The Occult Significance of Dreams,' SE 19 (1925), 125-138; 'Dreams & the Occult,' SE 22 (1933), 31-56. Notably, Freud makes reference in three of these papers (1921; 1925; 1933) to a single patient called Frau Hirschfield, who evoked in him 'those two unsettling & intertwined phenomena that always made him uneasy: countertransference & thought-transference,' (Falzeder 2015, 45).

[62] Freud's misgivings on the topic of precognition were not shared by all of his psychoanalytic successors-see, for example, Eisenbud 1982.

work on telepathy as being foundational to psychoanalysis and integral to its metapsychology.[63]

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" (Freud cited in Devereux 1974, 88). Freud subsequently speculated (1933) that such phenomena constituted the original archaic method of communication between individuals that, in 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 still, under certain conditions, become active again (Freud 1933, 108). Moreover, by locating his speculations concerning the origins of telepathy within an atavistic and bio-mechanistic frame of reference, Freud distinguishes his approach to such phenomena from that of figures such as Myers, who construed its origins and activities as existing within a more expansive and evolutionary frame of reference (Thurschwell 2001, 124-125; Kripal 2010, 66-75).

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" (Freud cited in Devereux 1974, 86). 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. In a strikingly 'esoteric' turn of phrase that he used in his correspondence to Sandor Ferenczi on October 6th 1909, Freud describes telepathy as a "secret" that he wishes to "initiate" Jung into at a later date (Mayer 2007, p. 81).

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 (Roazen 1975). In the course of these discussions, associated concepts, such as that of '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

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[63] See Hewitt 2014, 86-89 & Frosh 2013, 5-6 for more on this theme.

of satisfactory criteria to distinguish its unique characteristics from those of telepathy (Kakar 2003, 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 (Philips 1995, 19). 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 (Gyimesi 2009). 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.

However, it is possible the origins of Freud's 'resistance' to telepathy in particular-and to the 'occult' more generally-may have been over-determined by a combination of theoretical difficulties and unconscious conflicts. As an old man C. G. Jung recalled how in 1910 he had the following conversation with his then-mentor, Sigmund Freud:

> 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" (Jung 1983, 173).[64]

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[64]As has been remarked, "Freud is fascinating...because he hesitated between both revelation & concealment...we can learn much about the mechanisms of occult repression from the master theorist of repression himself" (Josephson-Storm 2017, 181).

It is evident from his retrospective account that Jung associated 'occultism' both with those forms of knowledge he considered psychoanalysis to be incapable of digesting, in addition to constituting a 'threat,' against which Freud 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 (Jung 1983, 173-74).[65]

One striking feature of Jung's remark is his incidental reference to parapsychology as a "rising contemporary science," an observation that would support the contention that psychical research was not merely a 'fringe science,' but that it actually constituted one of the 'mainstream' contributors to psychology during the period when these disputes were originally underway.

We can further observe in this account Jung's belated recognition regarding the extent to which Freud's attitude towards the occult was both highly conflicted and subject to a plethora of complex defensive processes. In Jung's estimation:

> To me 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 (Jung 1983, 173-75).

In this regard, it is notable that more recent commentators have speculated how Freud himself may have displayed signs of a 'repressed' telepathic sensitivity that was experienced by him during the course of his own clinical practice.[66] In the Forsyth case, for example (in 'Dreams & Occultism'

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[65] For a more skeptical reading of the wider context to this dispute as reported by Jung, see Fodor (1971, 110), in which he comments that "It is 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."

[66] See, for example, Wargo (2018). As this hypothesis is based on the psychological significance that such ostensibly anomalous processes may have had for Freud, its validity

[1933]), it has been argued that the telepathic phenomena purportedly manifested by Freud's patient, Herr P., could have originated from within Freud himself (Reichbart 2019, 109-111). It 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 (see Wargo 2018, 222-230; Resnik 2000, 119-120).[67] Freud's adoption of a *de facto* 'dual aspect monist' theory of mind, entailing an ontologically ambiguous unconscious inhabiting a liminal state located somewhere between the physical and the mental, was theoretically capable of incorporating the possibility of telepathic phenomena originating from an as yet unidentified archaic phylogenetic process (See Solms & Turnbull 2011, 4-6).[68] 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' (Kripal 2010, 222). 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 (Andreas-Salome 1987, 169-170).

As matters transpired, Freud's hopes in this regard were to be largely unfulfilled as, over time, this *primal scene* was transformed into a transgenerationally *encrypted* trauma, possessive of its own *spectral* 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" (1988, 38). As a consequence, the metapsychological 'carapace' that classical psychoanalytic theory

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is therefore not dependent upon such arguments as might be adduced either to support or refute the ostensible 'reality' of such phenomena.

[67] For a haunting fictional elaboration of this theme as applied to an imaginary case of Freud's, see *The White Hotel* by D. M. Thomas.

[68] On the association between dual aspect monism & paranormal phenomena, see Kripal (2019).

subsequently erected in response to this unconsciously perceived threat of an ontological *Outside* (Deleuze) gradually began to take on the aspect of a psychoanalytic metapsychology 'haunted' by the revenants and survivals signified by its own telepathic 'ghost.'[69] Viewed from this perspective, we might bring this particular topic to a conclusion with a coda that is also a precursor for work yet to come:

> Telepathy would be the name of an ongoing and groping research that-at the moment of its emergence and in the area of its relevance-had not yet grasped either the true scope of its own inquiry or the conceptual rigor necessary for its elaboration (Abraham & Torok 1986, 86).

'This is gold': Freud and Kabbalistic hermeneutics--

The links between psychoanalysis and the Jewish Kabbalah have been described as "profound"; whilst psychoanalysis itself has been proposed as constituting "a secular extension of Kabbalah"(Berke 2015, xi). Even so, it is a matter of record that no less a figure than the great scholar of Kabbalism Gershom Scholem (1897-1982) 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 (Dan 1962/1991, 6-7). Yet, in spite of the arguments that might be adduced against the pursuit of a comparative analysis, a strong case can nonetheless be made for construing the respective 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 (Drob 2000a, 47).[70]

The potential relevance of the Lurianic Kabbalah to psychoanalysis has been lucidly summarised as follows:

> 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

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[69] For more on the theme of 'haunting' in psychoanalysis, see Frosh (2013). See also Jung's remarks on the role of psychoanalytic theory as a defensive formation cited in Kingsley (2018, 508 n. 74).

[70] For arguments in support of viewing psychoanalysis and analytical psychology as essentially convergent disciplines, see Jacoby (2000, 489-503) & Brown (2018).

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 (Parsons 2006, 124-125).

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 (see, for example, Frosh 2006, 205-22). 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 (Bakan 1958/2004). Unfortunately, the general critical consensus was that this attempt was largely unconvincing.[71] 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 to psychoanalysis. Bakan also made a strong case for linking psychoanalytic interpretation to the Talmudic exegesis of the Torah.[72] However, his thesis that Freud identified with the militant messianism of Shabbatai Tzvi has been generally viewed as 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 respective 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, remains only partially successful due to the difficulties encountered in seeking to establish an unambiguous association between Freud and the Jewish mystical tradition (Bakan et al 2009). 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

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[71] For criticisms of Bakan's theses, see Drob (2010, 18-19 & 2000b, 242-3). See also Starr (2008, 17).

[72] See also Frieden (1990) on the role played by Talmudic hermeneutics in the formation of psychoanalytic dream interpretation.

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 (2008, 18).[73]

The above criticisms notwithstanding, Bakan did nonetheless 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 manuscript that—"This is gold,' and queried why Vital's work had never been brought to his attention before (Bakan 1958, xvi-xviii). Unfortunately, a disagreement that subsequently ensued between both parties 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 (Bakan 1958, xvi-xviii).[74]

It is worth remarking on the fact that Freud, in spite of his adherence to a scientific *Weltanschauung,* was in fact highly superstitious.[75] 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 *Doppelganger*, which may have had its counterpart in the Kabbalistic concept of the *Tzelem* (or celestial twin) (see Drob 2000b, 247). 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 (ibid.). Be that as it may, while Freud frankly acknowledged on his part the existence of strong political motives for keeping psychoanalysis

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[73] See also Keve (2000) for a fascinating, impeccably well-researched work of fiction that addresses this topic.

[74] Bakan's text also makes reference 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' & '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 & intriguing possibility.

[75] See chapter XIV ('Occultism') in Jones (1957, 402-436) for extensive evidence in support of this assertion.

separate from the occult, he also continued to aver in private that the occult was in fact inextricably bound to psychoanalysis (Brottman 2011, 6).

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 (Kradin 2016, 12). 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.[76]

Moreover, in his later correspondence Jung latterly came to the viewpoint 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' (cited in Drob 2000b, 249). Consequently, the parallels that Drob adduces between the Lurianic Kabbalah and Freudian Psychoanalysis are not quite as tendentious as they might initially appear to be (2000b, 22-23).[77]

Shifting our perspective momentarily to that of an influential early twentieth-century occultist, it is notable 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." (cited in Greene 2012, 393).[78] 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 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

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[76] Abraham to Freud, 11th May 1908, letter 30A, in Falzeder (ed.) (2002, 40). Notably in this regard, 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 McGuire (ed.) (1991, 146).

[77] 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.

[78] On Fortune's time as a student of psychoanalysis at The Medico-Psychological Clinic in Brunswick Square, see Knight 2000, 29-35.

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 (Greene 2012, 396-7).

The extent to which psychoanalytic theory is suffused by Kabbalistic traces has become increasingly apparent within some of the more recent scholarly literature (Greene 2012, 398-9).[79] Consequently, it is perhaps not so surprising to encounter in Freud's dream interpretation a hermeneutic approach that treats them 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.[80] By extension, it is also possible for many parts 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 be dimly discerned:

> When Freud discovered (really, *re*discovered) the unconscious, he blended the logical positivistic notion of

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[79] See also Berke & Schneider 2008, 6.
[80] I am indebted to Greene (2012, 400) for both the quotation from Freud and the suggested parallels with Kabbalistic hermeneutics.

absolute science and the German Romantic conception of the mysterious preternatural powers of Nature. The result was a lexicon of ontic, mechanistic, dehumanised entities such as "drive" and "object," rather than "homunculi," "chimerae," "monsters," "demons," "angels," "ghosts," or "revenants" (Grotstein 2000, 144).

Indeed, there is reason to suppose that a number of influential post-Freudian analysts have-both tacitly and explicitly-engaged in the project of transforming "the positivistic-mechanistic drive unconscious into a numinous, mystical unconscious"(Grotstein 2007, 331).[81]

Conclusion:

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 (Borch-Jacobson 1992, 44).

This paper argues that, despite its ostensibly materialist credentials, Freudian psychoanalysis is permeated by esoteric 'traces' active within the main *corpus* of its metapsychology. The persistence of such traces is attributed to their original *encryption* through a process of *preservative repression* mediated via an occluded parapsychological 'tradition' active within Freudian psychoanalysis since its inception.[82] Furthermore, it is proposed that these 'occult' traces are not merely historical curios, but have continued to exert their influence in the formation of contemporary psychoanalytic theory (See Merkur 2010). The writings of James Grotstein (1925-2015) offer an exemplary instance of this resurgence of an aspiration originally voiced by Theodore Flournoy (1854-1920) for a *rapprochement* between the respective conceptualisations of the Freudian unconscious and the *subliminal self* of Frederick Myers.[83] Grotstein has described his own

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[81] Grotstein 2007, 331. While Grotstein's remark pertains specifically to the work of Wilfred Bion, additional evidence for this assertion can be found in Merkur 2010.

[82] 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 & fantasies...In contrast to this Freudian structure of oppositions, Abraham & Torok explore the mental landscapes of submerged family secrets & 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,' (Rand 1994, 18).

[83] 'It will be a great day when the subliminal psychology of Myers & his followers & the abnormal psychology of Freud & his school succeed in meeting, & will supplement &

project of seeking to integrate the 'pre-Freudian' *esoteric subject* with developments in 'post-Freudian' psychoanalysis in terms that are arguably reminiscent of Myers' conceptualisation of the *subliminal self*:

> 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 before Freud, that of a mystical, preternatural, numinous second self-and then reintegrate that older version with the more positivistic version that Freud gave us (Grotstein 2000, xvi).

In recent years an inter-disciplinary endeavour known as the cognitive science of religion (CSR) has risen to prominence across the academic study of religions. In 2017 a special edition of the academic journal *Aries* was devoted to a series of papers illustrating the potential value of applying CSR to the study of the Western esoteric field as part of a broader agenda to ground "the study of religion in our best current theories of how the human mind works" (Asprem & Davidsen 2017, 1).

References to either psychoanalysis or analytical psychology were notably absent from the assembled papers. It might be inferred from this that the dynamic psychologies have been superseded by the ostensibly superior (or at least academically more fashionable) cognitive models of the mind. Such a development is not in itself so surprising, given that within the academic study of esotericism, Jungian analytical psychology is more likely to be encountered as an object of research than as a theoretical resource through which such research might legitimately be conducted.[84] Yet despite the comparative neglect of the dynamic psychologies in such instances, there is reason to suppose that the judicious application of psychotherapeutic ideas within historiographical contexts can possess a valuable utility.

In a striking instance of conceptual metaphor deployed as polemic intervention, it has been proposed that "Studying Western esotericism is much like applying psychotherapy to the history of thought" (Hanegraaff

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complete each other" (Flournoy 2007 [1911]), vii). See also Kelly et al (eds.) (2007) for evidence of a recent resurgence of interest in Myers' work within psychological circles.

[84] On analytical psychology as an object of study in the academic field of Western esotericism see, for example, Hanegraaff 2012a, 277-294.

2012b, vii).[85] One of the more recent methodological developments to which such a psychotherapeutically-informed approach might arguably be applied relates to the application of a demarcatory triune structure within contemporary academic research consisting of 'methodological agnostics,' 'reductionists' and 'religionists.'[86] Currently, it is the first of these orientations that appears to be in the ascendant within the academy, due to its ostensibly greater theoretical and empirical rigour comparative to the deficiencies associated with its less academically robust methodological competitors.[87]

However, viewed from within a specifically psychoanalytic frame of reference, it is possible to reformulate these developments as concurrently entailing both a repetition and an isomorphic refiguration of the long-standing problem of academic *othering* that the academic discipline of Western esotericism initially set itself the task of rectifying. Such symbolic *re-enactments* are commonly referred to in the contemporary psychotherapeutic literature as *parallel processes*.[88] It has been argued that such processes can also appear 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"(Kleinberg 2017, 63).[89] This is no more than to say that unconscious dynamics constitute an inherent part of the reflexive interplay of reason and emotion in the development of historiographical methodologies.[90] Moreover, it is important to emphasise that the existence

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[85] See also Hanegraaff 2005, 250 n. 67; Hanegraaff 2013b, 252-273.

[86] See McCalla,' Antoine Faivre,' pp. 411-442 for more on this.

[87] "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 & internal logic of historical criticism, & another that follows the logic of religionism" (Hanegraaff 2013b, 264). See also Hanegraaff 2012a (357-8_, in which he extends this binary division to occupy a triune field consisting of 'methodological agnosticism,' 'religionism' & 'reductionist' perspectives.

[88] '*Parallelism phenomena in psychoanalysis & 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 2009, 202).

[89] See especially the following: "Paralleling occurs when therapists, in the supervision setting, unconsciously identify with their patients, enact this identification, & elicit responses from the supervisors that replicate the difficulties they themselves have encountered-as *therapists*-in the therapy' (Runia 2004, 299-300, cited in Kleinberg 2017, 63).

[90] 'Psychoanalysis persists in its view that thinking is an emotional matter...Emotions cause some thoughts to be overvalued or denied. Anxiety, guilt & pain lead to defences. Pleasure & excitement can be sought at the expense of reality' (Mercer 2008, 64). See also the following remark by Bertrand Russell: 'In every writer on philosophy there is a concealed metaphysic, usually unconscious; even if his subject is metaphysics, he is almost certain to have an uncritically believed system which underlies his specific arguments' (cited Britton 2015, xiii). In such instances, the traditional phenomenological strategy of attempting to

of such processes does not preclude the creative possibilities of a synergistic dialogue occurring between theoretically divergent interlocutors as part of a wider shared commitment towards the establishment of an ever more rigorous and synoptic methodological *tertium quid.*[91]

An exemplary instance of such dialogue occurring within the academic study of religions can be found in Jeffrey Kripal's work on 'dual aspect monist' theories of mind, the findings from which he creatively utilises to provide the neurological substrate for his *homo duplex* speculations concerning the implications of anomalous phenomena for enhancing our understanding of the *sui generis* nature of human consciousness:[92]

> I see transpersonal psychology as a modern expression of an ancient gnosis about the dual nature of human consciousness, a gnosis witnessed to it in any number of Indic and western traditions, and more recently in modern Mesmerism, animal magnetism, psychical research, and psychoanalysis. All of these streams *put into conversation* constitute the true origins of my *homo duplex* speculations (Kripal 2008, 277).

Kripal has explicitly identified psychoanalysis as constituting a "spiritual map" that provides "a modern or postmodern mystical path for me"; notably in this regard, psychoanalysis has itself in more recent times been refigured-at least *in potentia*-as a secularised mystical endeavour with its own genealogy of "psychoanalytic mystics."[93] Consequently, it is not so

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'bracket' our cognitive bias is of limited utility insofar we can only bracket that which we're already consciously aware of.

[91] For an exemplary instance of just such a dialogue occurring between two of the leading contemporary scholars of esotericism (one the leading exponent of *methodological agnosticism,* the other an advocate for a position he has described as *academic gnosticism*), see Hanegraaff 2008, 259-276 & Kripal 2008, 277-279.

[92] See Kripal 2017, 197-200; Kripal 2019, 118-122: '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 third substratum or superreality. This is essentially what is done in dual-aspect monism' (Kripal 2019, 118).

[93] 'In effect, psychoanalysis has become my spiritual map through which I have travelled back along my own developmental arc to earlier & earlier levels of my psychic palace. In effect, it has functioned as a modern or postmodern mystical palace for me, back to the oedipal father, the preoedipal mother & the narcissistic self. How much of this is 'real,' & how much is constructed by the categories themselves? That is virtually impossible to say, at least for me. But isn't that how all mystical traditions function, as elaborate constructions of meanings, as maps that are as much fictions as reflections?' (Kripal 2001, 96-97). On the topic of 'psychoanalytic mysticism,' see Merkur 2010.

surprising to observe a theoretical overlap conjoining Kripal's investigations into the *supernormal* (a term originally coined by Myers in 1885) with a telepathically-imbricated Freudian metapsychology. Both endeavours exemplify in their respective fields a shared commitment to a dual aspect monist theory of mind that may itself be construed as inherently *paraconceptual* in terms of its de-structuring of the subject-object relationship (Solms & Turnbull 2011, 4-5).[94] Kripal (2019, 45) has cited the quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli in support of his argument for a re-calibration of the role of the humanities vis a vis the sciences, whilst advocating for a re-visioning of "the humanities as *the study of consciousness coded in culture*:"

> Contrary to the strict division of the activity of the human spirit into separate departments-a division prevailing since the nineteenth century-I consider the ambition of overcoming opposites, including also a synthesis embracing both rational understanding and the mystical experience of unity, to be the mythos, spoken and unspoken, of our present day and age (Pauli cited in Kripal 2019, 199-200.

To the extent that the scientific aspirations of psychoanalysis and analytical psychology effectively resulted in what has appositely been described as *the dream of a science* (Shamdasani, 2003) does not of itself militate against their respective values as theoretically sophisticated, clinically-informed disciplines, the findings from which have the potential to be creatively utilised for *the study of consciousness coded in culture* proposed by Kripal. Consequently, it is not so surprising to find the field of contemporary psychoanalysis described by one of its leading exponents as 'as an aesthetic, as a form of poetry.'[95] It is in this sense, then, that we might begin to recalibrate our representations of a historically-mediated psychoanalytic subject that is both imbricated in and decentred by its esoteric *other*, the boundary demarcations and theoretic potentials of which might therefore be thought of as theoretically situated before and after science.

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[94] However, it is important to acknowledge that there are nuances of opinion on this topic & that not all scholars of psychoanalysis necessarily subscribe to the view that Freud was a *de facto* dual aspect monist. 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 & brain for clinical purposes' (2015, 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, 9). However, while divergences of opinion on this question are to be acknowledged, it is worth stating 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 neuropsychoanalysis. On the genealogy of the *supernormal,* see Kripal 2010, 66ff.
[95] Michael Eigen, in Molino (ed.) 1997, 104.

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