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**Hypnosis lessons by stage magnetizers:  
medical and lay hypnotists in Spain**

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**Abstract:** During the late nineteenth century, Spanish physicians had few chances to observe how hypnosis worked within a clinical context. However, they had abundant opportunities to watch lay hypnotizers in action during private demonstrations or on stage. Drawing on the exemplary cases of the magnetizers Alberto Santini Sgaluppi (a.k.a. Alberto Das) and Onofroff, in this paper I discuss the positive influence of stage magnetizers on medical hypnosis in Spain. I argue that due to the absence of medical training in hypnosis, the stage magnetizers' demonstrations became practical hypnosis lessons for many physicians willing to learn from them instead of condemning them. I conclude that Spain might be no exception in this regard, and that further research should be undertaken into practices in other countries.

**Keywords:** stage hypnosis, science popularization, charlatan, animal magnetism, hypnotherapy.

## **Introduction**

In 1888, at the International Medical Congress in Barcelona, a Spanish physician argued that hypnotism should be snatched 'from the claws of charlatans and necromancers'.<sup>1</sup> A year later, this sentiment was echoed at the First International Congress of Experimental and Therapeutic Hypnotism held in Paris. As is well known, during the Congress, the Swiss doctor Paul-Louis Ladame, a devotee of the Salpêtrière School, put forward a motion to ban stage hypnosis.<sup>2</sup> By then, physicians representing the Salpêtrière, such as Jean-Martin Charcot and Georges Gilles de la Tourette, had become fervent denouncers of stage magnetizers. According to them, lay hypnosis was extremely dangerous from the point of view of public health.<sup>3</sup> However, the Belgian philosopher and psychologist Joseph Delbœuf, a follower of the Nancy School, objected. In his opinion, because of their lack of training, physicians were responsible for more danger to the public from hypnosis than the stage magnetizers were. In his writings, Delbœuf presented himself as a lay practitioner of hypnosis who owed much to magnetizers. He argued that magnetizers were the inventors of hypnotism, an art, he said, that had later been taken over by the Salpêtrière.<sup>4</sup> According to Andreas Mayer, the Nancy School did not attack stage hypnosis as fiercely as its competitor in Paris. Hippolyte Bernheim and other representatives called for a gradual appropriation of lay hypnosis in order to extend their medical authority over the field.<sup>5</sup>

To promote the scientific status of hypnosis, a common strategy adopted by physicians was to demarcate the clinical use of hypnotism from its recreational use as part of stage magnetism shows.<sup>6</sup> As Kim Hajek shows in the French case, in the 1880s hypnotism researchers engaged in rhetorical boundary-work. The result was a complex discourse involving continuities and discontinuities between hypnosis and its predecessor, animal magnetism, where medical hypnotists ended up distinguishing 'universal' magnetic facts from 'perishable' magnetic theories.<sup>7</sup> Scholars have argued that this type of boundary-work was aimed at constructing a medical monopoly on hypnosis.<sup>8</sup> However, how could physicians build such a monopoly without having full control over training in hypnosis? With this concern in mind, during the Congress on Hypnotism (1889), Ladame suggested that hypnosis be included in the medical curriculum for psychiatrists, thereby preventing them from learning the 'immoral lessons' they were open to by

attending stage magnetizers' demonstrations. At the congress, some French attendees alleged that this inclusion in the teaching programme was already a reality in France, while physicians from other countries made it clear that, unfortunately, France was an exception in this respect.<sup>9</sup> At that time, no formal training in hypnosis was included in the medical curriculum in most European countries. In Spain, physicians using hypnosis declared themselves to be self-taught.<sup>10</sup>

The primary sources leave no doubt that physicians and other scientists regularly and eagerly attended stage hypnosis shows, having been unable, it seems, to fulfil their curiosity in any other way.<sup>11</sup> Scholars have highlighted the influence of these stage demonstrations on the development of medical hypnosis in Britain, Germany and France, exploring the related medical and legal debates, and indicating the continuities between animal magnetism and hypnotism.<sup>12</sup> However, just how these lay hypnosis demonstrations became 'secret' learning opportunities for doctors has yet to be examined in detail. In this paper I discuss the positive influence stage magnetizers had on the spread of hypnosis within the medical community in Spain. I argue that witnessing the magnetizers' demonstrations provided physicians with practical hypnosis lessons that could be applied in a clinical context. Hence, though most physicians claimed they were scandalized by the demonstrations, they had good reason to attend them and learn hypnotic techniques through observation. In other words, their attendance at such events cannot be reduced to their alleged desire to condemn lay hypnosis and their reported outrage on leaving performances. In fact, indignation sometimes acted as a required façade, i.e., as the attitude that physicians had to display to justify their attendance.

One may argue that stage magnetizers' shows were not suitable places to learn, due to fraud. Debunkers claimed that the 'demonstrations' were a mere *mise en scène* where both the hypnotist and the hypnotized faked the symptoms of hypnosis.<sup>13</sup> In this paper, I argue that fraud did not affect the possibility of learning how to hypnotize during the show; after all, a simulation is still a practical demonstration. Just as one can learn artificial resuscitation techniques by observing someone perform them on a mannequin, so physicians could learn how to hypnotize by watching stage magnetizers in action, fraud or no fraud. To

exemplify these arguments, I start by giving a brief overview of medical hypnosis in Spain before examining the cases of two lay hypnotists who had a major impact on the country. First, I present Alberto Santini Sgaluppi (a.k.a. Alberto Das): an alleged charlatan who contributed to the medical interest in hypnosis. Then, I deal with Onofroff: a stage magnetizer committed to popularizing hypnosis, despite having the medical establishment against him.

### **Medical hypnosis in Spain**

In general, the approach of the Nancy School was more attractive to Spanish psychiatrists than was Charcot's experimental hypnotism. By the end of the nineteenth century, Spanish psychiatry had become focused on therapeutics and some physicians were willing to embrace suggestion as a clinical practice. Hence, hypnotism became a synonym of psychotherapy.<sup>14</sup> However, introducing medical hypnosis into Spain was a difficult task. Scepticism was fuelled by different circumstances. On the one hand, the Catholic Church warned the population of the loss of free will during hypnotic sleep and the possibility of being involved in crime without knowing it. On the other hand, the use of hypnosis in theatres and spiritist séances,<sup>15</sup> combined with its absence from the medical curriculum in universities, generated uncertainties about its scientific status and its therapeutic applications.<sup>16</sup> Despite the shaky reputation of hypnotism and the lack of formal training in the field, several physicians developed hypnotic skills on their own and applied them in their clinical practices. The best-known Spanish medical hypnotist internationally was Abdón Sánchez Herrero (1852-1904). A former member of the Société d'Hypnologie et de Psychologie, he started using hypnosis with his patients at his private clinic without having any official training. Apart from Sánchez Herrero, the names of the following Spanish physicians deserve a special mention in regard to their use of hypnosis: Juan Giné y Partagás (1836-1903), director of the Nueva Belén asylum in Barcelona, where he practised hypnotherapy; Timoteo Sánchez Freire (1838-1912), a psychiatrist who was confident of the therapeutic benefits of suggestion; Eduardo Bertrán Rubio (1838-1909), a university lecturer keen to include hypnosis in the medical curriculum; Víctor Melcior (1860-1929), a physician who regularly used hypnosis in his clinical practice; and Ángel Pulido (1852-1932), a medical hypnotist and self-declared enemy of stage magnetizers.

Even the neurologist and Nobel Prize winner Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852-1934) developed an interest in hypnotism and its applications as an anaesthetic.<sup>17</sup>

For many years, only wealthy people could benefit from hypnotherapy in private asylums such as the Nueva Belén or during private medical consultation. To remedy this situation, between 1895 and 1905 Melcior ran a small charitable clinic in Barcelona where he offered free hypnotic treatments with great success, despite the initial mistrust of the patients. Melcior had little to no experience in hypnotherapy before opening the clinic.<sup>18</sup> Like him, other physicians using hypnosis in Spain declared themselves to be self-taught. According to Sánchez Herrero, he was inspired by books such as *Le somnambulisme provoqué* (1886; Spanish translation, 1887) by Henri Beaunis and *De la suggestion et de ses applications à la thérapeutique* (1886; Spanish translation, same year) by Hippolyte Bernheim.<sup>19</sup> If we are to believe his words, Sánchez Herrero's expertise came exclusively from reading the medical literature and from personal experience. By the end of the nineteenth century, medical books on hypnosis existed alongside works frequently authored by alleged doctors and professors with vaguely Oriental-sounding pseudonyms that aimed to popularize hypnosis.<sup>20</sup> These latter works threatened any scientific status hypnosis might have had by linking it with animal magnetism, Spiritualism, fakirism and other highly questionable domains on the fringes of belief, spectacle and pseudoscience.<sup>21</sup> They described different techniques to hypnotize, just as the medical books did, including the one most frequently used by physicians: visual fixation, pioneered by James Braid (Figure 1). According to military physician Lorenzo Aycart (d. 1910), the hypnosis literature was no mystery to many Spanish doctors who, apparently, had acquired a good theoretical knowledge of the subject.<sup>22</sup> How is it then, that physicians still felt the need to attend lay hypnosis demonstrations? What did they have to offer that could not be found in the books?

Figure 1. Abdón Sánchez Herrero testing a hypnotic device invented by himself and based on visual fixation. Source: A. Sánchez Herrero, *El hipnotismo y la sugestión*, lámina 1<sup>a</sup>, p. 84 (Valladolid: Tip. H. de J. Pastor, 1891/1887).

No matter how didactic popular or medical works on hypnotism may have

been, it is clear that witnessing how a subject was hypnotized, instead of merely reading about it, provided a far better understanding of the techniques involved. In practice, Spanish medical hypnotists shared a common point of departure: they started as amateurs with few chances, if any, of seeing how hypnosis was used in Spanish clinics, but with plenty of opportunities to witness it on stage. Of course, sometimes physicians may have journeyed abroad to learn from the expertise of the professionals at Nancy or at the Salpêtrière School, as Delbœuf and others did; but that was not the case for the majority of medical hypnotists in Spain. These physicians agreed that charlatanism perverted the therapeutic use of hypnosis, mixing the 'honourable cause' of the medical profession with the ambitions of the 'theatre speculators'. However, unlike their colleagues in Austria, Italy and Belgium, where physicians backed laws to ban stage hypnosis—passed in 1880, 1886 and 1892 respectively<sup>23</sup>—Spanish medical hypnotists thought that there was no need to bring in new legislation to control magnetizers; rather, they could be judged using existing charges, such as fraud and illicit medical practice.<sup>24</sup>

Physicians attending stage hypnosis shows usually said they left scandalized.<sup>25</sup> It is clear, nonetheless, that they had first taken good note of how magnetizers hypnotized their subjects and the phenomena that they were able to produce on stage through suggestion. In the works of most Spanish medical hypnotists we can find accurate descriptions of the procedures used in these spectacles. These practitioners have also been shown to have had a good knowledge of the methods employed by foreigners, such as Hansen and Donato: the most celebrated stage magnetizers in Europe.<sup>26</sup> Although Hansen and Donato did not tour Spain, local physicians were familiar with chronicles from the press praising their abilities, as well as with the harsh accusations of medical celebrities such as Cesare Lombroso.<sup>27</sup> While reading about Donato and Hansen, physicians could compare their hypnotic techniques with those used by stage magnetizers in Spain, or even with those described by Bernheim, Braid and other medical experts. They were aware that many of the magnetizers' methods—especially the so-called *coup de Hansen*<sup>28</sup>—were not suited for clinical practice; nevertheless, not all stage magnetizers used spectacular techniques conceived and executed to marvel the audience. For instance, the popular stage magnetizer Onofroff adopted less spectacular procedures, such as Braidian visual fixation. His penetrating gaze

earned him the nickname of ‘the man with steel eyes’.<sup>29</sup>

Bertrán Rubio was one of the few Spanish medical hypnotists to acknowledge the transfer of knowledge and the affinities between lay and medical hypnotists. In his words:

Physicians were not the ones who invented hypnotism, nor were physicians the first magnetizers.

Braid learnt to magnetize from Lafontaine;<sup>30</sup> and the experiments initiated by Charcot at the Salpêtrière reproduced, in substance, the same hypnotic phenomena that Hansen and Donato had already popularized in the form of spectacle.<sup>31</sup>

Such an affirmation represented a fresh view within the Spanish medical setting. Physicians using hypnosis recognized the influence of animal magnetism—a prior non-scientific phase of hypnosis, they said—but they were not keen to recognize the knowledge transfer from magnetizers and lay hypnotists to medical experts.<sup>32</sup>

### **When the charlatan is the expert**

As Fred Nadis has shown, by the turn of the twentieth century, some stage magnetizers were no longer interested in displaying the marvels of hypnosis by simply praising its mysterious wonders. On the contrary, many tried to mimic science. In such cases they often preceded their names by academic titles such as professor or doctor, and their demonstrations usually started with a short lecture on hypnotism and its therapeutic benefits. That was then followed by a practical lesson using alleged patients or a person from the audience.<sup>33</sup> Framing these shows as scientific demonstrations was especially effective in countries where hypnosis had not been legitimized within a medical setting, such as Spain. The lack of an authoritative voice on the subject made it easier for itinerant magnetizers—usually foreigners—to convince the audience of their supposed expertise in medical hypnosis. In their demonstrations, they presented hypnotherapy as a cutting-edge treatment in order to establish their clinics and make a handsome living.

That was the case of Alberto Santini Sgaluppi (d. 1919), an Italian stage magnetizer (Figure 2) who travelled the world: from Spain, Belgium and France, to the United States and South America. He used several different surnames, usually Das or Sarak, and fraudulent medical and noble titles. In Spain, he was called Dr. Alberto Das or the Count of Das; I will refer to him by this surname from now on. Little is known of Alberto Das, but his own version of events was that he was an American citizen, member of the Washington Academy of Medicine, born in India. Every time he was accused of charlatanism, he argued that he was being mistaken for an Italian who had stolen his name and diplomas.<sup>34</sup> He arrived in Madrid in 1887 and, as we will see, he was soon regarded as a medical expert in hypnosis, a status he maintained until being discovered to be a fraud in 1890.

Unlike most magnetizers, who usually performed in large theatres, Das's predilection was for entertaining the aristocracy in private sessions, with renowned physicians also present. As stated by a journalist of the time, after Das's arrival in Madrid, hypnotism became a 'monomania', attracting the attention of many men of science who had discredited it until then. Despite the disdain of 'real' experts such as Sánchez Herrero, and the opposition of the Roman Catholic Church to hypnosis,<sup>35</sup> Das became the medical authority for the public in this field. He founded a weekly journal entitled *La Hipnoterapia* [Hypnotherapy], of which, unfortunately, no copies seem to have survived. In the press, his name was cited alongside those of the founders of hypnotism, such as Liébeault.<sup>36</sup> While in Madrid, Das was invited to both medical and military centres, where he gave practical lectures on hypnotism. The programme for such events was rather eclectic. Clinical discussions of the use of hypnosis as an anaesthetic were mixed with wondrous demonstrations of hallucinations induced by hypnotic suggestion. Das used different hypnotic techniques on several subjects, from allegedly hysteric women to 'sane' subjects. During demonstrations, he expressed his opposition to stage hypnosis and his will to fight for the triumph of hypnotherapy.<sup>37</sup>

Figure 2. Alberto Santini Sgaluppi in his aristocratic gown. In: 'Encore un mot sur le comte de Sarak', *Annales des Sciences Psychiques* **18**(1-2), 59 (1908).

Das's fame was such that he even demonstrated hypnosis to the monarchy.

Such demonstrations took the form of both clinical and amusing exhibitions, in which science and spectacle blended together as in the didactic eighteenth-century experiments with electricity by clergyman and physicist Jean Nollet (1700-1770). In early 1888, Das received the prestigious Order of Queen Isabel the Catholic: a civil order granted by the Royal Court in recognition of services of benefit to the country.<sup>38</sup> Aware of Das's fame as a medical expert in hypnosis, in February 1888 a group of physicians from Madrid led by Ángel Pulido decided to react. By then, Pulido was trying to establish himself as a reference for medical hypnotism in Spain. During a demonstration of hypnosis at the Sociedad de Higiene [Hygiene Society], Pulido and his supporters accused Das of being a charlatan. However, they failed to expose him and, more importantly, failed to prove themselves to be the 'real' experts in hypnosis. As I have shown elsewhere, the reason for this failure was that their demonstration mimicked a stage hypnosis show. Although the opening and closing lectures were aimed at condemning the recreational use of hypnosis, during the practical demonstration they induced hypnotic phenomena similar to those exhibited by stage magnetizers—for instance, they made a woman act as different animals or witness an apparition of the Virgin. Consequently, they ended up entertaining the audience instead of offering a statement of the dangers of hypnotism in the hands of alleged charlatans such as Das.<sup>39</sup> This suggests that Spanish medical hypnotists did not know how to provide a clinical display of hypnosis in order to demarcate it from stage shows. Even Charcot's lessons at the Salpêtrière were in many ways a spectacle. As Jacqueline Carroy argues, for most stage magnetizers, Charcot's lectures did not differ essentially from their own demonstrations. Gilles de la Tourette admitted that on one occasion a magnetizer pretending to be a medical student attended one of Charcot's lessons before disappearing with one of the hysteric female subjects, who started working in a so-called '*cabinet somnambulist*', where somnambulists gave medical prescriptions. As Asti Hustvedt shows, hysteric subjects were often exchanged between stage and medical hypnotists.<sup>40</sup> Not surprisingly, one of the patients that Pulido used during the demonstration at the Hygiene Society was Carolina del Viso, an allegedly hysteric woman frequently employed in stage hypnosis shows.

Pulido's attack had no effect on Das's reputation. The best proof of this is that around 1889, Das founded the first Spanish clinic devoted exclusively to

hypnotic treatments: the Spanish Hypnotherapeutic Institute. Besides attending to patients, Das taught hypnotherapy courses on two afternoons a week, thereby helping popularise the view that hypnosis was not dangerous, but therapeutically beneficial. Though in 1887 Sánchez Herrero complained of having public opinion against him due to rumours surrounding his hypnotism experiments, in early 1890 the press proudly advertised Das's hypnosis lessons, urging people to enrol.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have any information regarding the students that Das taught; however, it is more than likely that physicians and psychiatrists filled the courses. After all, it is clear that many men of science were fascinated by Das and regarded him as an expert in hypnosis before he was discovered to be a fraud. In 1890, Eduardo Bertrán Rubio, a renowned physician and promoter of hypnotism, wrote of this fascination:

Not long ago, in the major cities of our country, we experienced the disappointment, and even the professional embarrassment, of witnessing the spectacle offered by some men of science [...], welcoming, flattering and becoming devotees of a self-styled doctor [Alberto Das] (whose academic diploma I do not know if anyone saw) in hypnosis performances that did not offer any scientific novelty, nor the explanations of the hypnotist [...].

I do not know if this flamboyant hypnotist, who turned out to be something worse than a simple charlatan, I do not know if he went back to his land grateful for the kindness our physicians showed him, or pleased and satisfied for having initiated us in a science [hypnosis] that he must have thought was completely unknown, or almost so, in this corner of Europe.<sup>42</sup>

It is important to note that Spanish medical hypnotists were reluctant to cite Das's name, while they had no problem in naming other magnetizers who were not causing trouble in their country, such as Donato. The quotation above is an example of this deliberate desire to erase Das from the history of hypnotism in Spain, an end that was most certainly achieved.

At the end of 1890, Das was sent to prison because he had transformed the Spanish Hypnotherapeutic Institute into a luxurious asylum and could not afford to maintain its debts. Unable to present his medical diploma or demonstrate his noble title to the police, he started to be called a charlatan in the press. With his reputation ruined, Das left Spain for Belgium, where he played the same role, and also seduced the Belgian monarchy with his demonstrations of hypnosis before being expelled from the country for fraud in 1892.<sup>43</sup>

The case of Alberto Das shows that, on his arrival in Spain, there was no clear reference-point as to what a medical expert in hypnosis should be like, and what he would be capable of achieving therapeutically through suggestion. Moreover, it seems that the 'real' experts only reacted when Das set foot into Madrid in 1887 and obtained an honour from the Royal Court. Some might consider it a coincidence, but that same year marked the start of what Ángel González de Pablo has called a 'hypnotic frenzy' in most medical journals in Spain. It also coincided with the publication of the first important medical writings on hypnotism, by Sánchez Herrero and Giné y Partagás.<sup>44</sup> Were these publications a reaction to Das's fame? Interestingly, at that time, Sánchez Herrero criticized the tendency 'to confuse and mix the genuine researcher, as I presume to be, and our honest aims, with the music hall or theatre speculators looking for awards and other benefits at the expense of experimenting with individuals without any humanitarian aim'.<sup>45</sup> Once again, this is an indirect accusation aimed at Das without mentioning his name, in order to avoid giving him more publicity.

To summarise, despite the disdain of medical hypnotists, it is clear that before his arrest in 1890, Das's public acknowledgement helped the scientific and popular interest in hypnosis, contributing to the illumination of a subject that had been scorned. He was largely responsible for transforming hypnosis into an alleged 'monomania' that attracted all kinds of attention: from the press, to reluctant physicians and the monarchy. At the same time, hypnosis became a worthy topic for medical journals to consider and some physicians claimed to be experts in the field, asking for a clear demarcation between lay and medical hypnotism. While propounding their expertise, they tried to erase any trace of Das's influence in Spain. Even if Das was a fraud, he had a positive impact on the Spanish 'hypnotic frenzy' that medical hypnotists have never recognized and

historians are yet to highlight.

### **Lecturing from the stage**

Alberto Das was not the only lay hypnotist who fascinated physicians and perhaps lectured to them on hypnosis at that time. Some Spanish doctors openly showed an interest in one of the most acclaimed stage magnetizers in both Europe and America: Onofroff (Figure 3). The real identity of this character is still unclear. He was said to be Russian, Belgian, Polish or even Catalan. Onofroff assured those who enquired that he was Italian but had been raised in Toulouse, where he allegedly started a degree in medicine. Over the years, he captivated the attention of renowned artists, such as Oscar Wilde and Salvador Dalí. Unlike other stage magnetizers, Onofroff had a long professional career and retired to Barcelona in 1934, where he founded a school to teach hypnosis by correspondence.<sup>46</sup>

Figure 3. A cartoon depicting Onofroff. In: F. Barangó Solis, 'Onofroff, el hipnotizador', *La Unión Ilustrada* 8(379), p. 2, 1916. Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Onofroff first arrived in Madrid in 1891, when the scandal over Das had subsided. Unlike Das, he performed in big theatres and did not try to open a hypnosis clinic, though he did call himself a doctor. His first stay in Spain lasted less than three years. In Spring 1894 the Hygiene Society—the same organization that tried to expose Das in 1888—communicated their concerns regarding Onofroff to the governor of the province. Medical practitioners, who were members of the Society, claimed that every night people fainted and suffered from nervous disorders during Onofroff's performance. The governor entrusted the Academy of Medicine with an investigation. Pulido was among the medical experts involved. Following Onofroff's request, the Academy agreed to hear what the magnetizer had to say in his defence. In a brief speech, Onofroff acknowledged the dangers of stage hypnosis, but claimed that other public spectacles, such as bull fights, also made people faint.<sup>47</sup> Through this declaration he showed himself to be a foreigner with little understanding of the Spanish pride in their bull fights. The following stanzas of an amusing poem addressed to Onofroff in a journal in 1894 provide an illustrative example:<sup>48</sup>



magnetizers, such as Hansen and Donato, also provided private demonstrations of hypnosis to physicians willing to discuss or put into practice different hypnotic techniques.<sup>51</sup> As we are about to see, in Spain Onofroff organized private sessions for doctors and medical schools on demand. And why should stage magnetizers not have scientific admirers, such as doctors, keen to learn hypnotic techniques in order to adapt them to clinical practice?

That was the case of Lorenzo Torremocha Téllez, professor at one of the most prestigious faculties of medicine in Spain: the University of Valladolid. He was especially fascinated by extraordinary phenomena related to hypnotism, such as mental suggestion. Janet and Gibert's experiments in this area with the subject Léonie Leboulanger in Le Havre (1885-86) were well known to Spanish physicians. In fact, Sánchez Herrero, Ramón y Cajal and others had tried to replicate them in their private practices.<sup>52</sup> Torremocha had seen Onofroff perform for the first time around 1894 when he was a medical student in Madrid. He became fascinated by the magnetizer's feats, especially his signature wonder, telepathy, and attended shows whenever he could, more and more convinced of Onofroff's expertise. In his opening lecture of the academic year 1927-28, before his medical colleagues and students, he claimed that Onofroff was the best hypnotizer he had ever seen. He clearly felt that he could learn a lesson or two from his expertise and was not ashamed to admit it.

With this idea in mind, in 1916 the Dean of the University of Seville invited Onofroff to demonstrate his skills to the Faculty of Medicine. On the day of the demonstration, the university auditorium was packed. From the stage, Onofroff demonstrated his knowledge of hypnosis and his abilities in mental suggestion to an expectant audience.<sup>53</sup> In keeping with his reputation, he performed several telepathy experiments. When the magnetizer asked for the collaboration of a member of the audience, Torremocha volunteered with delight. Onofroff asked him to hide an object of his choosing in the building. With his eyes covered, the magnetizer then asked Torremocha to guide him mentally. As usual, the experiment was a success and Onofroff found the object.<sup>54</sup> It was not the first time that a magnetizer had been invited to Spanish scientific and academic institutions. As mentioned above, Das was frequently requested by medical and military centres despite the accusation of charlatanism from the Hygiene Society. Already

in 1894, a physician had warned of magnetizers 'seducing' faculties of medicine in order to obtain their endorsement.<sup>55</sup>

Onofroff's demonstrations were influenced by those of Stuart Cumberland, a prominent English 'thought-reader' known for the technique of muscle reading or Cumberlandism.<sup>56</sup> While Onofroff referred to his unique psychic abilities to explain telepathic phenomena, he was keen to share his knowledge of hypnosis. In 1902, he published a popularizing booklet entitled *L'Hypnotisme à la portée de toutes les intelligences*, as Dr. H. [Henri] Onofroff. His aim was to 'summarize in this small volume, with a *very simple style*, the main observations made by the savants and by ourselves, during these long years of public experimentation'.<sup>57</sup> It is important to notice that Onofroff considered himself a 'public experimenter' and saw his shows as popularizing scientific demonstrations. When he was on a stage, whether it was in a theatre or the auditorium of a faculty of medicine, he felt committed to the popularization of hypnosis. Judging from the testimony of fascinated doctors such as Torremocha, Onofroff sometimes achieved his aim.

This case shows that the official discourse does not always match reality. Although the medical establishment was against Onofroff, physicians still attended his shows or invited him to give private demonstrations. On many occasions, the desire of physicians to learn from the magnetizer's expertise overcame the official condemnation. Onofroff and other lay hypnotists were aware that their demonstrations were not just mere entertainment to many of the doctors attending. Faced with the lack of medical training in hypnosis in Spain, stage magnetizers embraced their role as transmitters of hypnosis knowledge and techniques.

## **Conclusions**

Stage hypnosis had a positive impact on medical hypnosis in Spain that is not always evident. At a time when hypnotism had not yet been legitimized within the field of medicine, shows by alleged charlatans and lay hypnotists, framed as scientific demonstrations, became unique opportunities to acquire hypnosis know-how. In such demonstrations, physicians could witness the implementation of hypnotic techniques and observe the phenomena they had read about in the medical literature. Since hypnosis was not included in the medical curriculum and

most physicians could not afford to go abroad, learning from stage magnetizers became an affordable option. This learning process was usually vicarious: physicians learned by watching lay hypnosis demonstrations and without getting involved. As I mention in the Introduction, many physicians said they left such demonstrations scandalized; however, we should not forget that complaining about magnetizers, rather than acknowledging them, was the attitude physicians were expected to adopt in front of their peers. After all, acknowledging scientific interest in lay demonstrations could put their medical status on the line and expose their ignorance of ongoing debates on hypnotism in Europe. Of course, for medical hypnotists such as Sánchez Herrero and Pulido, there was more at stake than for other physicians who, like Torremocha, were curious about hypnosis but were not aiming to develop careers in the field.

Learning from lay hypnotists should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness within the Spanish medical community. As we have seen, many physicians were aware that the best hypnotizers were not always medical doctors. Yet, acknowledging the skills of the magnetizers did not imply attributing them scientific status. After the Das scandal in 1890, Bertrán Rubio made it clear that Onofroff and other popularizers ‘are not scientific experimenters, nor medical hypnotists, they are but stage magnetizers, daring and somewhat adventurous empirics’.<sup>58</sup> Although I am not sure how to interpret Bertrán Rubio’s use of the term empiric—which on many occasions had a pejorative sense<sup>59</sup>—I like to think that it is used to describe, following Matthew Ramsey’s definition, ‘unqualified persons who frankly practised medicine’.<sup>60</sup> The cases examined in this paper are just examples of the neglected role played by itinerant magnetizers in providing technical hypnosis know-how to Spanish physicians. However, Spain might not be an exception. In Germany, psychiatrist Albert Moll (1862-1939) opposed stage hypnosis demonstrations; nonetheless, he recognized that Hansen, Donato and others had been ‘of great service to science, since without them we should probably still be ignorant of the subject [hypnotism]’.<sup>61</sup> We do not need new sources to examine this issue in other countries; we just need to read the ones we have from a different perspective from that of their medical authors. For instance, the impressive knowledge of Gilles de la Tourette about the mesmeric scene in Paris reveals more than his will to expose lay hypnotists; and Lombroso’s attack on

Donato and Pickmann<sup>62</sup> in Italy speaks of more than his intention to ban stage hypnosis.<sup>63</sup> There will always be a degree of speculation in this type of research because, most of the time, it deals with what doctors denied and condemned. Yet, not challenging their discourse would mean failing to provide a plural, and probably more accurate, history of hypnosis.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Dr José López Alonso quoted in: ‘Congreso de ciencias médicas’, *La Exposición* **67**, 5-10, 1889, at p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> E. Bérillon (ed.), *Premier congrès international de l’hypnotisme expérimental et thérapeutique* (Octave Doin, Paris, 1889), pp. 28-44.

<sup>3</sup> J.-M. Charcot, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 9, pp. 479-480 (Bureaux du Progrès médical, Paris, 1890). G. Gilles de la Tourette, *L’Hypnotisme et les états analogues* (E. Plon, Paris, 1887), p. 440.

<sup>4</sup> J. Delbœuf, *L’Hypnotisme et la liberté des représentations publiques* (Ch. Aug. Desoer, Liège, 1888); *Magnétiseurs et médecins* (Félix Alcan, Paris, 1890). See also: T. Trochu, ‘Comment un savant devient “guérisseur” : d’après une lettre inédite de Joseph Delbœuf à William James’, *Rev. Hist. Sci. Humaines* **28** (January), 165-187 (2016).

<sup>5</sup> A. Mayer, *Sites of the Unconscious: hypnosis and the emergence of the psychoanalytic setting* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> H. Wolfram, ‘“An object of vulgar curiosity”: legitimizing medical hypnosis in Imperial Germany’, *J. Hist. Med. Allied Sci.* **67**(1), 149-176 (2012).

<sup>7</sup> See Kim Hajek’s paper in this special issue.

<sup>8</sup> For the Spanish case see: Á. González de Pablo, ‘Consolidar, colonizar, excluir: estrategias de legitimación de la hipnosis médica’, in *Los límites de la ciencia: espiritismo, hipnotismo y el estudio de los fenómenos paranormales (1850-1930)* (ed. A. Mülberger), Chapter 5 (CSIC, Madrid, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Bérillon, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 39-42.

<sup>10</sup> A. Graus, ‘Hypnosis in Spain (1888-1905): from spectacle to medical treatment of mediumship’, *Stu. Hist. Phil. Biol. Biomed. Sci.* **48**, 85-93 (2014).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, L. Aycart, ‘Dos sesiones distintas y un solo espectáculo verdadero’, *Rev. de Sanidad Militar* **2**, 52-60 (1888); Á. Pulido, ‘Una sesión de hipnotismo en la Sociedad Española de Higiene’, *El Siglo Médico* **35**, 129-131 (1888).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, A. Gauld, *A History of hypnotism* (Cambridge University Press, \* supply date of publication\*), pp. 188-189, 302-306; J. Carroy, *Hypnotisme, suggestion et psychologie: l’invention de sujets* (P.U.F., Paris, 1991), pp. 40-42; K. Hajek, *Fluid boundaries : hypnotism as science in late nineteenth-century France*, Doctoral dissertation (University of Queensland, 2016); A. Harrington, ‘Hysteria, hypnosis, and the lure of the invisible: the rise of neo-mesmerism in fin-de-siècle French psychiatry’, in *The anatomy of madness. Vol. III.* (ed. W. Bynum, R. Porter and M. Shepherd), Chapter 8 (Routledge, London and New York, 1988); Mayer, *op. cit.* (note 5), Chapter 4; A. Winter, *Mesmerized: powers of mind in Victorian Britain* (University of Chicago Press, 1998); Wolfram, *op. cit.* (note 6).

<sup>13</sup> C. Wolff, *Hipnotismo teatral: (sus farsas)* (Gassó Hnos, Barcelona, n.d.).

- <sup>14</sup> R. Huertas García-Alejo, *Historia cultural de la psiquiatría: (re)pensar la locura* (Catarata, Madrid, 2012).
- <sup>15</sup> In contrast to Spiritualism, Spiritism is based on the doctrine of Allan Kardec (1804-1869), which became popular in France, Spain, Italy and South-American countries such as Brazil. The spiritist doctrine combined utopian socialism with a new understanding of Christian values. Spiritists believed in reincarnation and the plurality of the inhabited worlds in the universe. See, e.g.: L. Sharp, *Secular spirituality: reincarnation and spiritism in nineteenth-century France* (Lexington Books, Lanham, 2006).
- <sup>16</sup> Graus, *op. cit.* (note 10), pp. 86-87; A. Diéguez Gómez, 'Hipnotismo y medicina mental en la España del siglo XIX', in *En ningún lugar, en parte alguna: estudios sobre la historia del magnetismo animal y del hipnotismo* (ed. L. Montiel and Á. González de Pablo), pp. 197-228 (Frenia, Madrid, 2003).
- <sup>17</sup> For more information see: L. Montiel and A. González de Pablo (eds), *En ningún lugar, en parte alguna: estudios sobre la historia del magnetismo animal y del hipnotismo* (Frenia, Madrid, 2003).
- <sup>18</sup> For more information see: Graus, *op. cit.* (note 10), pp. 89-90; M. Balltondre and A. Graus, 'The city of spirits: spiritism, feminism and the secularization of urban spaces', in *Barcelona: an urban history of science and modernity* (ed. O. Hochadel and A. Nieto-Galan), pp. 154-156 (Routledge, London and New York, 2016).
- <sup>19</sup> A. Sánchez Herrero, *El hipnotismo y la sugestión*, pp. VII-VIII (Valladolid: Tip. H. de J. Pastor, 1891/1887). For a detailed examination of Spanish translations of works on hypnotism see: Á. González de Pablo, 'El hipnotismo en la España del primer tercio del siglo XX', in *En ningún lugar, en parte alguna. Estudios sobre la historia del magnetismo animal y del hipnotismo* (ed. L. Montiel and Á. González de Pablo), pp. 229-299 (Frenia, Madrid, 2003).
- <sup>20</sup> See, e.g: Adrijnevvyh, *Hipnotismo, magnetismo, sugestión* (Lavoisier, Paris, n.d.); Q. G. Polintzieu, *Magia blanca moderna, o sea, magnetismo, hipnotismo, sugestión y espiritismo* (Maucci, Barcelona, 1899).
- <sup>21</sup> Bernheim, Bourneville and other physicians also highlighted the parallels between hypnosis and fakirism: Hajek, *op. cit.* (note 12), p. 43.
- <sup>22</sup> Aycart, *op. cit.* (note 11), p. 56.
- <sup>23</sup> Gilles de la Tourette, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 485-487. On Belgian law see Kaat Wil's paper in this special issue.
- <sup>24</sup> E. Bertrán Rubio, *Hipnotismo y sugestión* (Espasa y C<sup>a</sup>, Madrid, 1890), pp. 260-267; J. Giné y Partagás, *Obras escogidas* (Tip. La Aca. de Serra Hnos. y Rusell, Barcelona, 1903), pp. 404-458; Á. Pulido, *Estudios médicos* (Imp.- Enrique Teodoro, Madrid, 1889), pp. 104-115; T. Sánchez Freire, *La hipnología en nuestros días* (Imp. José de Panedes, Santiago, 1888).
- <sup>25</sup> See, e.g.: Aycart, *op. cit.* (note 11).
- <sup>26</sup> Bertrán Rubio, *op. cit.* (note 24), pp. 43-44; Sánchez Herrero, *op. cit.* (note 19), p. 152.
- <sup>27</sup> S. Stewart Steinberg, *The Pinocchio effect: on making Italians, 1860-1920* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 268-269.
- <sup>28</sup> This refers to Hansen's 'brutal' hypnosis technique: the hypnotizer grips the patient's head vigorously and lunges it backwards with a fast and violent movement, putting the patient 'to sleep'.
- <sup>29</sup> 'Music-halls, concerts, cabarets, cirques, bals', *Paris Soir*, 27.3.1926.
- <sup>30</sup> Charles Lafontaine (1803-1892) was a French magnetizer whose demonstrations in Manchester in the 1840s inspired Braid to pursue the study of hypnotism.
- <sup>31</sup> E. Bertrán Rubio, *Sobre hipnotismo y otras cosas* (Imp. de Henrich y C<sup>a</sup>, Barcelona, 1894), pp. 73-74.
- <sup>32</sup> Sánchez Freire, *op. cit.* (note 24), pp. 5-16.
- <sup>33</sup> F. Nadis, *Wonder shows: performing science, magic and religion in America* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2005), p. 91.
- <sup>34</sup> S. Quereilhac, *La imaginación científica: ciencias ocultas y literatura fantástica en el Buenos Aires de entre-siglos (1875-1910)*, Doctoral dissertation (Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2010); C. de Vesme, 'Les mésaventures d'un "Yogui" à Paris. Le "comte A. de Sarak",', *Annales Sci. Psy.* **18**(1-2), 21-23 (1908). *El Conde de Das (Doctor Albert Sarak)* (Imp. Rural, Montevideo, 1906). Translated into French, English, German, Dutch and Greek.
- <sup>35</sup> The Roman Catholic Church warned against the evil character of hypnotism, especially from the point of view of free will. In an article in the Catholic press, Das is referred to as 'the Devil': E. Fernández-Hidalgo, 'El Diablo en Madrid', *La Unión Católica* **II** (216), 1 (1888).
- <sup>36</sup> 'En el Círculo military', *La Monarquía*, 8.2.1888.
- <sup>37</sup> Aycart, *op. cit.* (note 11), pp. 54-55.
- <sup>38</sup> 'En casa del Dr. Das', *La Monarquía*, 23.2.1888; 'No title', *La Iberia*, 19.11.1888.
- <sup>39</sup> Graus, *op. cit.* (note 10), pp. 87-88.

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- <sup>40</sup> Carroy, *op. cit.* (note 12), p. 27; A. Hustvedt, *Medical muses: hysteria in 19th-century Paris* (W.W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 2012), pp. 107-116.
- <sup>41</sup> Sánchez Herrero, *op. cit.* (note 19), p. VIII; 'Cartera de Madrid', *El Liberal*, 11.2.1890.
- <sup>42</sup> Bertrán Rubio, *op. cit.* (note 24), pp. 265-266.
- <sup>43</sup> 'Les aventures du comte de Das', *Le Courrier de l'Escault*, 18.8.1892.
- <sup>44</sup> Á. González de Pablo, 'La hipnosis médica española y sus contextos (1887-1934)', in *La gestión de la locura* (ed. J. Martínez Pérez et al.), pp. 485-506 (Uni. de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca, 2008).
- <sup>45</sup> Sánchez Herrero, *op. cit.* (note 19), p. 350.
- <sup>46</sup> González de Pablo, *op. cit.* (note 8).
- <sup>47</sup> 'La Academia de Medicina y el adivinador Onofroff', *El Liberal*, 16.5.1894.
- <sup>48</sup> F. Pérez y González, 'Al Sr. H. Onofroff', *La Gran Vía* 2(49), 11 (1894).
- <sup>49</sup> 'Día parlamentario. Senado', *Heraldo de Madrid*, p. 2, 23.5.1894; 'No title', *La Corresp. de España*, p. 3, 21.5.1894.
- <sup>50</sup> M. Vallejo, 'Onofroff en Buenos Aires (1895): apogeo y caída de un ilusionista', *Prismas* 18, 111-131 (2014).
- <sup>51</sup> I am grateful to Heather Wolfram for the following reference on Hansen's 'special sessions' for physicians: R. Heidenhain, *Hypnotism or animal magnetism: physiological observations* (Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., London, 1888), p. 5. On Donato's private demonstrations in Italy see Maria Teresa Brancaccio's paper in this special issue.
- <sup>52</sup> A. Sánchez Herrero, 'Prólogo', in *La exteriorización de la motilidad* (A. de Rochas), pp. VII-XVI (Barcelona: Pujol y C<sup>a</sup>, 1897); S. Ramón y Cajal, *Recuerdos de mi vida*, Chapter 3 (Madrid: Alianza, 1981/1923).
- <sup>53</sup> L. Torremocha, *Discurso leído en la Universidad de Valladolid* (Cuesta, Valladolid, 1927), pp. 16-27.
- <sup>54</sup> Torremocha, *op. cit.* (note 53), pp. 18-27.
- <sup>55</sup> Dr. Gordillo, 'El hipnotismo', *El País*, 23.5.1894.
- <sup>56</sup> R. Luckhurst, *The invention of telepathy* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 63-66.
- <sup>57</sup> H. Onofroff, *L'Hypnotisme à la portée de toutes les intelligences* (Imp. S.-A. Demers, Québec, 1902), p. 7. Italics in the original.
- <sup>58</sup> Bertrán Rubio, *op. cit.* (note 31), p. 22.
- <sup>59</sup> See: M. Bariéty and C. Coury, *Histoire de la médecine* (Fayard, Paris, 1971), p. 163.
- <sup>60</sup> M. Ramsey, *Professional and popular medicine in France, 1770-1830* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 182. Although Ramsey calls this definition 'the more usual sense of the term' (p. 182), we must note that he also uses empiric as a synonym of quack and charlatan.
- <sup>61</sup> A. Moll, *Hypnotism* (Walter Scott, London, \* supply publication date), pp. 355-356. I am grateful to Holger Maehle for providing this quotation. On Albert Moll and hypnosis see especially: A-H. Maehle. 'The powers of suggestion: Albert Moll and the debate on hypnosis', *Hist. Psy.* 25(1), 3-19 (2014); Wolfram, *op. cit.* (note 6).
- <sup>62</sup> Pickmann was a Belgian stage magnetizer, clairvoyant and later magician who performed in Turin in 1890. He practised some divination experiments with Lombroso. See: G. G. Franco, *El hipnotismo clarovidente o Pickman y Lombroso en Turín* (Imp. y Librería de la Inmaculada Concepción, Barcelona, 1890).
- <sup>63</sup> Gilles de la Tourette, *op. cit.* (note 3); C. Lombroso, 'Il magnetismo animale e la fascinazione del Donato', *Gazzetta Letteraria Artistica e Scientifica*, X, 18, 1.5.1886.