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Discovering Palladino's mediumship

Otero Acevedo, Lombroso and the quest for authority

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Abstract: In 1888, the spiritist Ercole Chiaia challenged Cesare Lombroso to go to Naples and study a brilliant though still unknown medium: Eusapia Palladino. At that time, Lombroso turned down the challenge. However, in 1891 he became fascinated by the medium's phenomena. Despite the abundant literature on Palladino, there is still an episode that needs to be explored: in 1888, the Spanish doctor Manuel Otero Acevedo accepted the challenge rejected by Lombroso, spent three months in Naples studying the medium and invited the Italian psychiatrist to join his investigations. This unexplored episode serves to examine the role of scientific authority, testimony and material evidence in the legitimization of mediumistic phenomena. The use Otero Acevedo made of the evidence he obtained in Naples reveals his desire to proclaim himself an authority on psychical research before other experts, such as Lombroso, Richet, and Aksakof.

1. Introduction

One early morning in 1889, in the room of an inn in Naples, the young Spanish physician Manuel Otero Acevedo, barely twenty-four years old, asked the medium Eusapia Palladino if she would work in broad daylight, the worst condition for producing mediumistic phenomena. He had finally managed to gain the trust of the medium, who was well known in her region but without yet enjoying the

international fame that would soon accompany her. A few months before the debut of these séances, Palladino had been the object of a public challenge made to Cesare Lombroso by the medium's protector Ercole Chiaia. Chiaia (1888) dared the eminent psychiatrist to study the phenomena the medium claimed to be instrumental in bringing about under strictly controlled conditions, assuring Lombroso that he would not be deceived. Lombroso's eventual refusal left the challenge unresolved but provided an opportunity for other scientists to take his place and accept the dare; as in the case of Otero Acevedo. As this paper shows, the young physician travelled to Naples willing to act as a substitute for Lombroso during séances, in the hope of thereby obtaining the support of the Italian psychiatrist and lending credibility to his own research on such a controversial topic.

While in Italy, Otero Acevedo tried to obtain material evidence of mediumistic phenomena. During the early morning of 1889 mentioned above, when Palladino agreed to work in broad daylight, he placed a bowl on the table in front of her. Inside, he put a clay mould and covered it with his white handkerchief. As on other occasions, his intention was for the fluid faces and hands of supposed spirits materialised by Palladino to be imprinted onto the clay. When the medium went into a trance, her spirit guide, John King, took possession of her. After what Otero Acevedo described as an attack of hysteria, Palladino woke up suddenly and announced: *É fatto!* The medium was exhausted; but her efforts were not in vain. On removing the handkerchief, Otero Acevedo saw that the clay mould had been imprinted with "the tips of fingers that could not belong to any other than a child, of no more than a year old. The nails and nail folds were marked on them." (Otero Acevedo, 1893-95, Vol. 2: 250). Compared to the detailed faces and hands obtained in the séances held in the dark (Figure 2), this impression could be considered trivial. However, having obtained it in broad daylight made it more valuable. Otero Acevedo felt fully satisfied: this impression not only demonstrated that the phenomena were real, but also confirmed his scientific thoroughness in obtaining this evidence. With proof of these characteristics he was ready to present his studies to the scientific community.

This daylight séance provides the key to understanding this paper. On the one hand, we are faced with two people at the beginning of their careers. In 1888

Otero Acevedo was a recently-graduated physician who was preparing his doctorate in Madrid, and Palladino was a medium who, at that time, was only known in Naples. For the former, his experiences with Palladino marked his debut in the field of psychical research, as well as being an excellent opportunity to publicise his work to foreign scientific authorities. For the latter, the séances meant a first step towards fame and international renown, which would make her the most investigated medium and about whom scientists would write the most between 1890 and 1910. Without her, the history of spiritism and psychical research would not have developed in the same way.

Many scientists involved in psychical research in the late nineteenth century felt as if they were part of a pioneering and revolutionary field for psychological, physical and biological knowledge. The period coincided with the professionalization of science and saw the virtual completion of the separation between “experts” and “amateurs”. Sommer (2013b) argues that at this stage, there was no clear distinction between psychical research and psychology in most European countries or in the United States. Many psychologists were willing to explore the limits of the human mind, and spiritism provided an ideal experimental subject for this. The medium became a scientific object in its own right¹ (Ellenberger, 1970). Psychological societies in Germany, Britain and France were founded by savants with a deep interest in mediumistic phenomena (Lamont, 2013; Plas, 2012; Sommer, 2013a). Spain, however, had no such societies. Mülberger and Balltandre (2012) have highlighted the scientific frenzy for psychic phenomena in Spain in the 1920s, under the influence of the French *métapsychique* (Lachapelle, 2011). Meanwhile, in the late nineteenth century, Otero Acevedo felt practically alone. At that time, the boundaries between spiritism and psychical research as a science were non-existent; in fact, such a demarcation was never truly settled (Graus, 2015). For this reason, Spanish pioneers such as Otero Acevedo sought the support of foreign researchers and travelled to other countries to study mediums who, though ensconced within the spiritist movement, were keen to work under strictly controlled conditions and perhaps to contribute to the generation of scientific knowledge.

The importance of Palladino has been highlighted by the men of science who studied her. It is difficult to find a prestigious scientist of the era who did not attend a séance with the medium.² The alleged *conversion* to spiritism of Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), who met Palladino in 1891, is attributed to her phenomena³ (see, e.g.: Blondel, 2002; Ferguson, 2007; Sommer, 2012a). According to Alvarado (2011), this fact gave rise to the first systematic investigation of Palladino's phenomena: the legendary séances in Milan in 1892. The medium was invited by the Minister of the Tsar, Alexander Aksakof (1832-1903), a man well-versed in spiritism (Gordin, 2004). The séances attracted renowned scientists and intellectuals such as the physiologist Charles Richet (1850-1935), the astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli (1835-1910), the philosopher Carl du Prel (1839-1899) and Lombroso himself. From then on, Palladino was a guest at prominent scientific institutions, such as the *Society for Psychical Research* or the *Institut Général Psychologique*. Historians have covered these and other experiences at length;⁴ however, at least one chapter in the career of the medium remains to be written: Otero Acevedo and the séances in Naples (1888-89).

This case can provide us with a better understanding of why Lombroso became interested in Palladino in 1891, after refusing Chiaia's challenge in 1888. With only a few exceptions (see: Biondi, 1988), historians have ignored the role of Otero Acevedo in this matter so far. As this paper shows, several instances suggest that the young Spanish physician convinced Lombroso of the significance of the phenomena Palladino claimed to be instrumental in bringing about. Nevertheless, the scarcity of primary sources demands caution. Indeed, Otero Acevedo's papers were not preserved after his family moved to Argentina and sold his possessions in the early twentieth century (García Domínguez, 1986). Furthermore, Lombroso does not seem to cite the Spanish physician in his writing regarding Palladino. As we will see in Section 3 below, Otero Acevedo was clearly upset by the fact that the eminent psychiatrist never mentioned him. A reference from Lombroso would have certainly helped to validate his research centred on Palladino.

In this paper, as well as examining the issue referred to in greater depth, I use Otero Acevedo's studies in Naples to investigate the role of evidence and testimony in legitimising mediumistic phenomena. I argue that the way in which Otero

Acevedo used the clay moulds of alleged materialised spirits obtained with Palladino as exemplary of the scientific quest for objectivity in the late nineteenth century. As Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison (2007) have shown, at that time scientists adopted what these historians refer to as “mechanical objectivity”, which attempted to suppress any form of subjectivity and let nature “speak for itself”. Psychological research began in the period in which the scientist’s “subjective self” started to be perceived as an obstruction to achieving objectivity. At the séances, though, scientists were not only dealing with their “subjective self”, they were also confronted by that of the medium. Some historians agree that to avoid losing objectivity, researchers metaphorically transformed the mediums into mechanical scientific instruments or “automatic machines”: producers of mediumistic phenomena (Bacopoulos-Viau, 2013; Noakes, 2002).

Obtaining material evidence of these phenomena, such as photographs or clay moulds of supposedly materialised spirits, became a strategy adopted by researchers such as Otero Acevedo to “suppress” subjectivity (Cheroux et al., 2004; Lamont, 2013). They presented these proofs as *irrefutable* evidence of what was witnessed in the séances. In many cases this evidence acted to ensure that mediumistic phenomena was not the product of a hallucination or a fraud (Wolffram, 2012). As I shall argue, regardless of how convincing some evidence such as photography was, appealing to its objectivity and neutrality was not enough to advocate the reality of the phenomena. The discourse that framed the evidence, based on the construction of an *irrefutable* testimony, determined its legitimising role. As a result, the testimony of prestigious scientists frequently played a more important role than the material evidence.

In *A social history of truth* (1994), Steven Shapin has argued that bearing witness to a deed is an ethical problem, since witnessing is promising that a person’s word can be believed in. As he has demonstrated, trusting in the testimony depends on a series of socially established moral criteria, such as honour or virtue. As we shall see, the construction of an *irrefutable* testimony of Palladino’s phenomena, carried out by Otero Acevedo, illustrates the kind of attributes that he required to give credence to his word before authorities like Lombroso, Richet and Aksakof.

In the first section of this paper I will briefly discuss the careers of Otero Acevedo and Palladino before their meeting in Naples. I will then discuss why Otero Acevedo decided to accept the challenge by Chiaia that Lombroso had rejected. In the middle and final sections, I will explore the role of physical evidence—such as spirit photography—and testimony in the legitimation of mediumistic phenomena. Based on the use Otero Acevedo made of the evidence obtained in the séances with Palladino, I aim to reveal his intention to become a renowned expert in psychical research.

2. The young Manuel Otero Acevedo and Eusapia Palladino

The journalist and writer Raimundo García Domínguez states that, according to rumours, Manuel Otero Acevedo (1865-1920) was “everything anyone needed to be to go inexorably to hell: atheist, mason, vegetarian, Voltairian, perhaps nudist and, without doubt, federal republican. A spiritist, of course, and perhaps an Esperanto speaker. He only just fell short of being branded a Bolshevik, despite his wealth, in those last years of his, which coincided with the Russian Revolution” (García Domínguez 1986, p. 11). Some of these rumours were indeed true, like the fact that he was an atheist, a mason and a republican. However, he never actually declared himself to be a spiritist. He developed an interest in psychic phenomena during his youth, between 1888 and 1895, after graduating in medicine in Santiago de Compostela and specialising in surgery of the nervous system, of which he was a pioneer in Spain.

Otero Acevedo soon became a remarkable personality of his time within the field of medicine; a celebrity who history, nevertheless, has forgotten. Once he obtained his MD in Madrid (1891), the renowned physician and politician Federico Rubio (1827-1902) took him under his wing at the *Instituto de Terapéutica Operatoria* [Institute of Surgical Therapeutics], which specialised in the training of surgeons among others things. Otero Acevedo’s colleagues began to call him the “Captain General of Spanish surgery” because of his expertise in brain surgery. At that time, he was the only practitioner of this revolutionary field in Spain and one of the few in Europe (Bargiela, 1902).

Otero Acevedo was also well known outside the field of medicine and was active in the intellectual life of Santiago de Compostela and Madrid. As a cultured young man, he made friends with Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936), today an emblematic playwright and novelist with a penchant for the occult, who assisted Otero Acevedo in a clairvoyance experiment in 1890. The experiment was inspired by Janet and Gibert's research on mental suggestion at a distance with the somnambulist Léonie, at Le Havre (1885-86). Using a medium and somnambulist from Madrid, Otero Acevedo tried to find out what Valle-Inclán was doing in Santiago de Compostela at that exact moment. Judging from their letters, they saw the experiment as a success (García Domínguez, 1986; Milner Garlitz, 1990).

As we shall see, Otero Acevedo's interest in mediumistic phenomena was primarily experimental, and was marked by scepticism and materialism, as a result of which he denied the existence of the spirit and, therefore, the spirit hypothesis. In 1892, he participated in the *Hispano-American International Spiritist Congress* (Madrid). Discontented with the spiritist doctrine, in 1895 he was a founding member of the *Sociedad de Investigaciones Psíquicas Iberoamericanas* [Ibero-American Society for Psychological Research], which was intended to: "investigate and study psychic phenomena and their related areas. It avoids all political or religious questions completely" (Sociedad, 1895, s. n.). It was, without doubt, one of the first societies devoted to psychical research in Spain.

Otero Acevedo was no stranger to the Spanish readership. He was a prolific writer in the press, focusing particularly on the scientific examination of spiritist phenomena from his sceptical point of view. Between 1888 and 1895 he was one of the few renowned scientists in Spain who openly expressed his interest in the subject. Regarding his books and articles on psychical research, for this paper I have paid special attention to the two volumes of *Los espíritus* [The spirits] (1893-95),⁵ as well as two series of articles he published in the newspapers *El Heraldo de Madrid* and *El Globo*, which were later published in book format, entitled *Los fantasmas* [The phantasms] (1891)—Italian and German translations in 1895 and 1896—and *Lombroso y el espiritismo* [Lombroso and spiritism] (1895). Both included the subtitle: "notes for the psychology of the future", which indicates the approach with which Otero Acevedo addressed these topics.

Lombroso y el espiritismo (1895) is his last publication on psychical research and the most interesting for this case study. In it he criticised the importance that Lombroso had acquired in Spain in the field of psychical research to the detriment of other scientists, such as Richet, whom he considered a greater expert (Otero Acevedo, 1895). The reason why Otero Acevedo stopped publishing on psychical research and concentrated on his medical career is for the moment, like so many other aspects of his life, a mystery.

As for Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918), the most interesting moment of her life for this paper, her early career as a medium, turns out to be the most unknown. According to Biondi (1988), no one documented Palladino's beginnings in spiritism. Also, the medium tended to tell her life story differently to different people. As Alvarado observed (2011), this fact is confirmed on comparing the biographies on the medium written by authors like Morselli (1908) with Palladino's accounts about her childhood and adolescence. The life events that do coincide and which are relevant to this paper are the following:

Palladino came from a very humble family from the south of Italy. Her mother died shortly after giving birth to her, and her father died when she was twelve years old. Without grandparents or close relatives who could care for her, she was forced to work, while still a child, as a maid for several bourgeois families in Naples. When she was a teenager, the first levitation phenomena began to occur. From the first manifestation of her mediumship until her death in 1918, she was a medium of physical phenomena, such as levitation or spirit materialisations. In 1872, in Naples, she was known as "la Sapio" (Bracco, 1907), a nickname that most historians seem to have ignored so far.⁶ By then the spiritist Giovanni Damiani and his wife were her protectors. Until 1886 the séances granted were few and always for the closest and most loyal friends of the Damiani family (Alippi, 1962). From then on, the doctor and university lecturer Ercole Chiaia (d. 1905) became her new protector and "manager". It was then that Chiaia began to forge the idea that Palladino could make herself known beyond Naples.

The wonders of Palladino were unveiled to the general public by means of a letter published in the Italian newspaper *Fanfulla* on August 9th 1888. The letter, entitled: "A challenge for science", was signed by Chiaia and was addressed to

Cesare Lombroso. Its content represented a formal invitation to witness the phenomena produced by an extraordinary Neapolitan medium (Palladino), whom Chiaia did not name and referred to merely as “the young woman” or even “the sick woman” (Chiaia 1888, pp. 169-174). To convince Lombroso, Chiaia insisted that the séances would be conducted under strict control conditions and with two of his trusted psychiatrists present. As is well known, Lombroso rejected the challenge; however, in 1891, taking advantage of his visit to the Naples asylum, he agreed to organise two séances with Palladino, after which he became interested in mediumistic phenomena (Lombroso, 1892).

Historians assume that Chiaia’s challenge in 1888 fostered Lombroso’s interest in Palladino in 1891 (see, e.g.: Alvarado, 2011; Blondel, 2002; Inglis, 1989). However, as one can see, between 1888 and 1891 a significant amount of time went by. This is the most interesting period for this paper. It was then that Otero Acevedo went to Naples to take up the challenge that Lombroso had rejected.

3. The challenge that Lombroso rejected

In 1888 Otero Acevedo was writing the book entitled *Los espíritus* (1893-95). At that time, his knowledge of spiritism was basically theoretical and was characterised by his scepticism. He decided to investigate the matter, and wrote to as many prestigious scientists and intellectuals in Europe as he could find who were involved in the issue. These savants included Richet, Crookes, Aksakof, Gibier, Delbœuf and Lombroso (Chiaia, 1890).

During the drafting of *Los espíritus* (1893-95), and above all, via the testimonies of authorities such as Crookes, Otero Acevedo realised that it was not enough to have a broad theoretical knowledge of spiritism. For this reason, on hearing of Chiaia’s challenge, he saw a unique opportunity to study the practical side of the spiritist phenomena. He wasted no time in writing to Chiaia, offering to carry out the experiments with Palladino that Lombroso had refused to direct. To convince him that he was the right man to do it, he made much of his materialist and sceptical conviction, as well as his desire to maintain the utmost rigour during the séances (Otero Aveco, 1893-95). After all, these were some of the powerful reasons why Chiaia had decided to challenge Lombroso.

Otero Acevedo did not specify which school of materialism he followed. Nevertheless, from his writings it is clear that, when he went to Naples in 1888-89, he denied the existence of the spirit and defined the brain as the material basis for mental phenomena (see, e.g.: Otero Acevedo, 1893-95). In the case of Lombroso, he was influenced by French positivism and German materialism (Frigessi, 2003). Before his alleged *conversion*, he gave a physiological explanation to mediumistic phenomena based on the idea of brain duality (see, especially: Harrington, 1987, pp. 145-147).

Otero Acevedo's firm attitude attracted the attention of Chiaia. During the séances, Chiaia was able to confirm Otero Acevedo's scepticism and his fierce determination to prevent any fraud:

Dr. Otero is armour-plated in disbelief, but he is a scrupulous observer, and I almost have a right to assume that he is the reincarnation of an Inquisitor from the times of Torquemada, judging by his way of tying up the medium and make it impossible for her to make the slightest movement. (Chiaia, 1890, p. 326)

By then, only Chiaia and some spiritists were confident that Palladino's phenomena could be of interest to science (Alippi, 1962). In an article in 1886, the writer and journalist Roberto Bracco (1861-1943) quipped that "la Sapia" was not Henry Slade (1835-1905), a famous medium also known for his experiments with the astrophysicist Johann Karl Friedrich Zöllner (1834-1882). Similarly, Bracco (1907) insisted that Chiaia was not the new Allan Kardec (1804-1869), the founder of spiritism in France (see, e.g.: Abend, 2004; Cuchet, 2012).

Therefore it is clear that when Otero Acevedo responded to Chiaia's challenge, Palladino was not internationally famous. This leads to the suspicion that he went to Naples moved by the fact that the challenge was aimed at Lombroso. I.e. that he gave credibility to the phenomena of the unknown medium simply because these were the object of the challenge to a scientific authority which was sceptical about spiritism. If he had only wanted to ascertain the veracity of the phenomena,

he could have contacted some Spanish mediums, to which similar wonders were being attributed at the time.⁷

Arriving at Naples, Otero Acevedo attempted to convince Lombroso that he should accompany him in the séances with Palladino. Most likely, he wanted to make use of Lombroso's scientific authority to legitimise his research, and at the same time build his own authority in the emerging field of psychical research. Unlike other authors, such as Aksakof (1890), Lombroso made no reference to the letters he exchanged with Otero Acevedo. Although I assume that they were few, in the opinion of the Italian psychologist Enrico Morselli (1852-1929) they could have been vital in convincing Lombroso of the relevance of Palladino's phenomena.⁸ In Morselli's opinion (1908, Vol. 1, p. 135), Otero Acevedo helped persuade Lombroso, as he did with Chiaia, by making the most of his materialistic beliefs.

According to the Spanish physician, after inviting Lombroso: "He answered me attentively, saying he would be greatly honoured with it, but the study had to be carried out in broad daylight and in conditions of rigorous experimentation" (Otero Acevedo, 1891, p. 1). Otero Acevedo agreed delightedly; however, on the day that he was expecting Lombroso, the latter replied: "I am very busy. I cannot leave Turin. You come here." (Lombroso in: Otero Acevedo, 1891, p. 1).

Over the years Otero Acevedo offered two very different versions of the response he received from Lombroso and the reaction it caused in him. In a series of articles entitled *Los fantasmas* (1891) he wrote:

The only regret I brought back from Italy was that an eminent person such as Professor Lombroso hadn't had the courage and independence of character needed to study subjects such as these, and confront the academics that rejected them without knowing them. (Otero Acevedo, 1891, p. 1)

This version of what happened, although it continues to be critical, contrasts with the one that Otero Acevedo offered four years later in a series of articles entitled *Lombroso y el espiritismo* (1895). On that occasion, he stated that:

In 1888, I wrote to him [to Lombroso] from Naples, urging him to study the phenomena that Eusapia produces, and he excused himself claiming that he was afraid that *academics would make fun of him*.

Two years passed: he attended three séances; saw a number of events, and then—perhaps unwisely—formulated theories that he believes might explain them. (Otero Acevedo, 1895, pp. 33-34, italics in the original).

As we can see, in this case Otero Acevedo exhibited a tone that was mocking, strident and even aggressive towards Lombroso. To what was this change of attitude due?

When Otero Acevedo wrote *Los fantasmas* (1891) he had just learnt about Lombroso's first experiences in Naples (1891). By that time, Lombroso had not ruled on the phenomena or made any reference to who or what had led him to study Palladino. Otero Acevedo's friendly tone can be interpreted as the hope he cherished that Lombroso would refer to him as the Spanish physician that convinced him of the scientific interest of the facts. Even so, when Lombroso finally spoke about the séances with Palladino in an article entitled "Spiritism and Psychiatry" (1892), he did not make the reference that Otero Acevedo had been waiting for. In that article, Lombroso's encounter with Palladino is described as a casual episode: "I was given the opportunity to study the manifestations produced by an extraordinary medium, Eusapia, and I accepted gladly" (Lombroso, 1892, p. 143). As we can see, Lombroso presented it as if he had agreed without hesitation, and he did not mention either Chiaia's challenge or Otero Acevedo's invitation in 1888.

After the first séances with Palladino, Lombroso was convinced of the reality of the phenomena he had observed; but, like Otero Acevedo, denied the spirit hypothesis. In a letter to Ernesto Ciolfi, one of the first of the Neapolitan physicians who became interested in the medium, Lombroso wrote: "I am completely confused and regret having fought so persistently against the possibility of the facts called spiritist; I say facts, because I am still opposed to the theory" (Lombroso in: Ciolfi, 1891, p. 332). In his opinion, the observed phenomena "are not of a nature such that explaining them would mean a world different from that which

neuropathologists support”(Lombroso, 1892, p. 146). Therefore, after the séances in 1891, his alleged *conversion* had not occurred.

After the publication of Lombroso’s article, Aksakof organised a series of séances in Milan (1892), which eventually turned Palladino into the “*diva des savants*”—as Edelman (1995, p. 190) called her. From then on, researchers in France, the United States and Britain became interested in the medium. Sidgwick, Richet, Ochorowicz, Carrington, Schrenck-Notzing or Morselli organised various séances with her. Had he been invited, Otero Acevedo would have joined them willingly. Judging by the critical and ironic tone that pervades the series of articles entitled *Lombroso y el espiritismo* (1895), it can be concluded that Otero Acevedo felt upset by the fact that Lombroso never mentioned him. A reference from Lombroso would have represented a wonderful letter of presentation to the scientific authorities, and perhaps, the proposal to be part of the scientific committees that studied Palladino thereafter.

Beyond the infighting that Otero Acevedo maintained with Lombroso, the latter’s silence with regard to the former contributed to the fact that historians have not highlighted the role of Otero Acevedo in legitimising Palladino’s mediumship before scientific experts. Otero Acevedo was certainly not the first savant to study the medium, but he does seem to be the first foreign scientist to do so. Accepting the challenge by Chiaia was, in part, a failure, because it failed to produce the desired recognition in front of Lombroso. As we shall see in the following sections, obtaining material evidence of Palladino’s phenomena helped Otero Acevedo to give validity to his testimony before other authorities like Richet or Aksakof.

4. *Indisputable evidence, irrefutable testimony*

Richet’s report on the séances in Milan (1892) ends in the following way:

Regardless of how absurd and inadmissible the experiments practiced with Eusapia were, I find it very difficult to attribute them to a conscious or unconscious trickery or to a series of tricks. However, there is need for formal, irrefutable, proof that there is no deception by Eusapia and illusion on our behalf.

There is therefore a need for us to find this indisputable proof. (Richet, 1893, p. 31, italics in the original)

Obtaining material evidence was one of the key elements for legitimising psychical research. If the phenomena could not be provoked, they had at least to be tested. For the German philosopher Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906), the testimony of the prestigious scientists was not enough to give credibility to the facts. In *Der Spiritismus* (1885) he defended his belief that the spirit materialisations produced by mediums such as Florence Cook were the product of a collective hallucination. As Wolfram (2012) argues, Hartmann's criticisms reinforced the need to find a proof that was not associated with sensory perception and which would persist after the séances. This type of evidence consisted mostly of photographs and wax or clay moulds for the spirit materialisations, and phonograph recordings for auditory phenomena. Both spiritists and supporters of other hypotheses presented them as neutral and objective evidence of what was observed (Charuty, 1999; Cheroux et al., 2004). In this sense, they attempted to separate the witness from the witnessed. However, such a separation only appeared to occur.

Otero Acevedo's séances with Palladino can be defined as the pursuit of this "indisputable proof" that Richet spoke of. To *capture* the spirit materialisations of faces and hands produced by Palladino, Otero Acevedo used clay moulds. The function of these is comparable to that fulfilled by spirit photography, which can be defined as the paradigmatic evidence to test this kind of phenomena. Therefore, in the following section I will refer to this before analysing the way in which Otero Acevedo obtained the clay moulds and the use that he made of the evidence. On the one hand, with this analysis I aim to clarify what Otero Acevedo and other researchers understood by spirit materialisations. On the other hand, I argue that to assess the role of evidence in the legitimation of mediumistic phenomena, we must take into account the testimony of the evidence.

4.1 Indisputable evidence: spirit photography

Otero Acevedo did not believe in spirit materialisations. In his view, what mediums materialised was what Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers and Frank Podmore

had called phantasms. In 1886, these three members of the *Society for Psychical Research* published two volumes entitled *Phantasms of the living*, which included more than 700 cases related to apparitions, hallucinations and telepathy. In these the authors distinguished between phantoms and phantasms. They decided to use the term phantasms, instead of phantoms, to make it clear that on mentioning apparitions they were not referring to the deceased. In the words of Gurney:

I refer to *apparitions*; excluding, indeed, the alleged apparitions of the *dead*, but including the apparitions of all persons who are still living, as we know life, though they may be on the very brink and border of physical dissolution. [...] All these we have included under the term *phantasm*; a word which, though etymologically a mere variant of *phantom*, has been less often used, and has not become so closely identified with *visual* impressions alone. (Gurney et al., 1886, p. XXXV, italics in the original).

In this sense, for Gurney, Myers and Podmore, phantasms, unlike phantoms, would represent the manifestation of living persons.

Scientists like Otero Acevedo (1895) and Richet (1922) found this definition very suitable and decided to use it to refer to spirit materialisations. The problem was that neither in French nor in Spanish are there words to distinguish between these terms. Obviously, this fact gave rise to a great deal of confusion. However, in the case which concerns us, we must be clear that when Otero Acevedo talked of spirit materialisations he did so referring to these phantasms. From now on, when using this word I will do so in the sense indicated.

Once a positivist scientist had accepted the existence of materialisations, the problem lay in providing irrefutable evidence. Photography was one of the most frequently used procedures because of its ability to make the “invisible” visible, to set the ephemeral, to objectify the perceptions and to offer neutral evidence of the phenomenon (Charuty, 1999; Cheroux et al., 2004). In spiritism, partial or total darkness at a séance was usually a requirement for producing any kind of materialisation (Blondel, 2002). The lack of light had been a major challenge to overcome in order to be able to obtain photographs. Crookes was the first scientist

to use magnesium light to take snapshots of the materialisation of the so-called spirit of Katie King, obtained by the medium Florence Cook (Brock, 2008; Medhurst & Goldney, 1964).⁹

Aksakof was one of the few psychical researchers who managed to take photographs of a spirit materialisation in the dark. He called this technique “transcendental photography”, inasmuch as the camera could show what those attending the séance had not seen but had touched or heard. These kinds of photographs, like those obtained by magnesium light, were of poor quality. The pictures often came out blurry and indiscernible shapes appeared, which gave rise to many speculations. They were nonetheless important for refuting some accusations, such as collective hallucination (Wolffram, 2012). According to Aksakof (1906/1890, pp. 178-242), photography was the ultimate evidence that Hartmann was wrong, because if the spirit materialisations were product of a hallucination, the camera would not be able to capture them.

Otero Acevedo (1895) trusted fully in the authenticity of the photos obtained by Crookes and Aksakof because he believed in their scientific thoroughness. He considered them to be spirit photographs to the extent that they had been obtained with the help of a medium. However, as mentioned above, he did not believe that the materialisations were spirits, but rather phantasms. To understand why he gave credibility to these tests, it is necessary to refer to the attitude he maintained towards spirit photography of a commercial nature, which he always considered to be product of a fraud.

At the end of the nineteenth century a whole market had developed around spirit photography. The basic procedure to obtain these pictures was the juxtaposition of two photographic plates, one for the living being and the other for the deceased. Different exposure times made it possible to obtain effects such as the transparency of the body or halos, which gave rise to the classical iconographic representation of spirits. The invention of this technique is attributed to American photographer William H. Mumler (1832-1884) (Kaplan, 2008). Mumler started using it around 1861, over one decade after the episode of the Fox sisters.¹⁰ The fact that this technique was developed in North America and in that period was largely a consequence of the American Civil War (1861-65). As happened in Europe after the

First World War, the grief of the families for the loss of their loved ones helped the proliferation of spiritism and spiritualism. Along with these factors, the rapid development of new technologies, as well as the lowering of costs, were key factors in the success of spirit photography (Brower, 2010; Cheroux et al., 2004).

Like Mumler, there were many photographers who profited from its commercialisation. However, engaging in this business also had its risks. When fraud was discovered, some photographers were prosecuted for producing these images. The best-known case is that of the Frenchman Édouard Isidore Buguet (1840-1901), a regular contributor to the *Revue Spirite*. In 1875, after amassing a considerable fortune as a result of his ability to capture the invisible, Buguet was sentenced to one year in prison for fraud (Monroe, 2008).

The spiritists were aware of fraud in spirit photography. After scandals such as that of Buguet, the techniques for obtaining these images were disseminated both by the detractors of spiritism and by its followers (Natale, 2015). Otero Acevedo knew them well and therefore denied the authenticity of commercial spirit photography. In 1892, during an informal meeting, a friend challenged him to produce an image of this type fraudulently. Otero Acevedo was delighted to accept the challenge. So that there could be no objection that a colleague had helped him by playing the role of the deceased, he decided to photograph himself *together with his own spirit* (Figure 1).



Figure 1. “PSEUDO-SPIRITIST PHOTOGRAPHS. Dr. Otero asleep and his *spirit* showing him the illness he will die of”, Otero Acevedo, 1892, p. 112, capital letters and italics in the original. ©Biblioteca de Catalunya (R. Marco).

Otero Acevedo did not produce such a photograph in order to falsify evidence of this kind, but only to denounce the fraud in commercial spirit photography. He completely trusted the photos obtained by Crookes and Aksakof. In this sense, it is clear that he judged “photographers” above photographs. This attitude can also be attributed to other scientists, such as Richet, who disparaged spirit photography in general but relied on photographic evidence to prove the materialisations of phantasms produced at Villa Carmen (Alger, 1905) by the medium Marthe Béraud (see, e.g.: Le Maléfan, 2002).

Sometimes photographs taken by respected men of science during séances were judged by other scientists to be clear evidence of fraud. For instance, in 1913 the German physician and psychical researcher Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862-1929) published *Materialisations-Phänomene*: a book in which he described his experiments with Eva C.—who was none other than Marthe Béraud—including several pictures of the materialisations brought about by the medium. In that case, scientific authority was not enough to persuade everyone of the validity of the photographs. Despite having the support of some of his colleagues (for instance Richet) German psychiatrists such as Albert Moll and Mathilde Kemnitz—both denouncers of “pseudoscience”—attacked Schrenck-Notzing’s book, judging the photographs to be clear instances of fraud (Sommer, 2012b).

As I note in the Introduction above, the discourse within which the evidence was framed was extremely important for its legitimation. It was the combination of that discourse with the scientific authority of the person giving testimony that made a proof *indisputable*. According to researchers such as Harry Price (1881-1948), the control conditions during the séances with Eva C. were poor, allowing the medium to freely move her hands and feet (Wolffram, 2009). This reduced the reliability of the evidence, despite Schrenck-Notzing’s testimony. That said, it is no coincidence that Otero Acevedo emphasised the strictly controlled conditions—including broad daylight—in which he obtained the clay moulds with Palladino.

At this point, we should consider the value of evidence in the scientific study of mediumship in the late nineteenth century. As I have mentioned, psychical researchers such as Crookes and Aksakof defined the importance of photography in terms of objectivity and neutrality. Thus they highlighted its ability to make the “invisible” visible and fix the ephemeral. Some historians, such as Charuty (1999), seem to accept these reasons and do not investigate the issue further. However, if we only took these arguments into account, we might ask why commercial spirit photography was so poorly valued by scientists such as Otero Acevedo and Richet. After all, the quality of these commercial photographs was better than those obtained by Crookes and others. I.e. in the main they met its function of objectifying the supposedly invisible and transitory. In addition, they gave rise to fewer interpretations insofar as they were consistent with the traditional

iconography: the spirits appeared covered with semi-transparent veils, and with their bodies diffused. In other words, their appearance was more *spiritual* than that of Katie King or Joey, the spirit photographed by Aksakof.

Therefore, it cannot be argued that the reasons why spirit photography became popular among some scientists were only those alluded to. Photography, by itself, never served to accredit or discredit mediumistic phenomena. As Lamont (2013) argues, the disputes over these phenomena were linked to the alleged honesty and competence of the individuals who defended its reality or its falsity. In his words: “appealing to the facts did not settle the matter, so competence to assess the facts was a necessary component of any position” (Lamont, 2013, p. 112). In this sense, prestige and scientific authority played an important role when assessing the authenticity of spirit photographs. As Otero Acevedo did with Crookes and Aksakof, scientists usually judged the “photographer” in preference to the photograph. This argument is applicable to other kinds of material evidence, such as the clay moulds used by Otero Acevedo, which I shall present below. But before doing so, let us return momentarily to the introduction of this section, to the citation where Richet (1893, p. 31) advocates the need to find “indisputable proof” of Palladino’s phenomena. If we take into account these arguments, it is not only that the evidence has to be irrefutable, but that its testimony also has to possess this difficult characteristic. The following section should be read as an attempt to obtain *indisputable* evidence of Palladino’s materialisations, based on the construction of an *irrefutable* testimony: that of Otero Acevedo.

4.2 Irrefutable testimony: Otero Acevedo

To capture the so-called spirit materialisations produced by Palladino, Otero Acevedo used clay moulds (Figure 2). As with photography, this procedure sought to obtain clear and tangible evidence of the phenomenon. In contrast to photography though, its cost was lower and it made it possible to obtain impressions in three dimensions. This fact was important as it proved that the materialisations were corporeal, i.e. that they filled space and were able to exert pressure on matter. If they had this capability, it meant that the materialised bodies

could lift objects, which would explain some mediumistic phenomena, such as levitation (Wolffram, 2012).



Figure 2. Imprints of faces and hands on clay moulds obtained by Otero Acevedo in the séances with Palladino (Naples, 1888-89). Otero Acevedo, M. (1893-95). *Los espíritus* (Vol. 2). Madrid: Revista Psicológica “La Irradiación”, p. 254. ©Biblioteca de Catalunya (R. Marco).

As Palladino was a medium of physical phenomena, the use of clay moulds in the séances was normal. Chiaia had obtained good results with them, which encouraged Otero Acevedo to try them out. In the Milan séances (1892), the evidence achieved by means of this method was highly valued by those attending (Aksakof, 1893). However, neither in these experiments nor in Otero Acevedo’s were the impressions on the moulds considered to be the product of a spirit. Although most scientists in the séances in Milan and Naples did not draw clear conclusions about the causes, Richet (1893) found that the faces and hands printed in the moulds were

very similar to those of the medium. According to Otero Acevedo (1893-95), one of the faces obtained by Chiaia was almost identical to Palladino. The medium denied that it was her and said that it reminded her of her mother.

The materialisations were the phenomena that required the greatest physical and psychic effort by Palladino. With light they were produced at very low intensity, so the majority of the séances in Naples were carried out in semi-darkness. Palladino was not hypnotisable, however, “when she wants to she can hypnotise herself, and falls into lucid somnambulism, lethargy or catalepsy” (Otero Acevedo, 1893-95, Vol. 2, p. 191). To produce any phenomenon, she needed to enter into a trance, which was when her spirit guide, John King, manifested himself. Based on the theories of the physician and philosopher Pierre Janet (1859-1947), Otero Acevedo came to the conclusion that the spirit guide was a subconscious personality of the medium.¹¹ When John King manifested himself, Palladino’s voice became lower and rougher. She spoke in Tuscan rather than Neapolitan, understood French perfectly and spoke to those present in the séances in the familiar *tu* form. If she was asked if she could produce a particular phenomenon, she responded: “we shall see” (Otero Acevedo, 1893-95, vol. 1, pp. 191-192).

As Owen (1989) has pointed out, the séances were a place for gender transgression. On adopting the personality of the so-called spirit of John King, Palladino was allowed to act in a way which she would not have been allowed in another situation, and even less so when those who surrounded her were renowned scientists and academics. After all, Palladino was illiterate and a woman of very humble origins who had worked for much of her life as a housemaid. Only at the height of the trance, and through the voice of a man, did she gain control of the situation: deciding which phenomena would be produced and under what conditions, becoming defiant if too much was demanded of her, and occasionally losing her temper. Out of the trance she was a headstrong woman, but behaved more timidly and accommodatingly, and never referred to those around her as *tu*¹² (Carrington, 1909; Rochas, 1897/1896).

To capture the materialisations on clay moulds, Otero Acevedo followed several precautions. As Zöllner did in his experiments with Slade (Treitel, 2004), he devised a number of procedures and devices to prevent fraud. In Madrid, he asked a

carpenter to build a wooden box with sturdy walls and a double lock, which he later used in the séances in Naples. Before the materialisation séances, he kneaded a portion of clay, which he then covered with a sheet of white paper and placed inside the aforementioned box. He locked the lid and added a padlock. He kept the keys in his pocket and placed the box two metres from the medium at most. After the trance state had passed, when Palladino announced to him: “*É fatto!*”, he would look amazed at the impressions of faces and hands that had appeared in the mould. When the séances were carried out in the dark, the imprints were in greater detail. During the process, Otero Acevedo and other attendees even managed to see an apparent luminous hand or face penetrating the box. Using the reported procedure, Otero Acevedo became convinced that the phenomena could not be the product of fraud. From that moment on he took fewer precautions (Otero Acevedo, 1893-95).

Otero Acevedo failed to provide a definitive explanation for this or other phenomena. However, he used the evidence obtained to convince several prestigious scientists and researchers of what he had observed. By means of this strategy he attempted to establish himself as the Spanish representative of psychical research. Aksakof (1890) recounts how in 1889 Otero Acevedo sent him a letter in which he talked about Palladino and the clay moulds that he had obtained. By then, Aksakof already had an extensive practical knowledge of mediumism, especially with the Englishwoman Mme d'Espérance (1855-1919). In his book *Animism and Spiritism* (1890), he described as extraordinary an imprint on a clay mould that Otero Acevedo had obtained in broad daylight: the above-mentioned tips of three fingers, so small that they looked like a child's (Aksakof, 1906/1890, p. 509).

In his correspondence with Aksakof, Otero Acevedo assured him that he need not doubt the reality of the phenomena observed, even though he had approached the séances with the preconceived notions of a “rabid materialist” (Aksakof, 1906/1890, p. 509). As in the letters to Lombroso and Chiaia, appealing to his materialistic conviction helped to lend credibility to his testimony. In general terms, it can be concluded that the impression of “strict materialist” that he wished to project took hold. For example, Morselli, who never knew him personally or wrote to him, warns that Otero Acevedo was “known for his ‘materialistic scepticism’” (Morselli, 1908, Vol. 1, p. 135).

Historians like Blondel (2002) assume it was the alleged *conversion* of Lombroso which encouraged Aksakof to organise the séances in Milan (1892). Given the information revealed, I argue that Otero Acevedo's work had an influence that was perhaps more decisive. On the one hand, his letters were the first news that Aksakof had of the existence of Palladino. In *Animism and Spiritism* (1890), the only reference to the medium appears in relation to Otero Acevedo's aforementioned experiences with moulds. On the other hand, at that time Lombroso had only attended a few séances with Palladino, whereas Otero Acevedo had been in Naples for three months in order to study her. Thanks to his experience with mediums, Aksakof was aware that multiple séances are required to avoid exhausting the medium, to gain her confidence and to succeed in observing a complex phenomenon. He also knew the difficulty of producing a materialisation in broad daylight, like that obtained by Otero Acevedo. For all these reasons, I assume that when Aksakof organised the Milan séances (1892), Otero Acevedo represented for him a greater expert in psychical research than Lombroso.

As mentioned above, Richet was another of those attending the Milan séances. In his memoirs the physiologist revealed that it was Aksakof who convinced him to attend (Richet, 1933). Taking into account the arguments I have just discussed, as well as Richet's materialistic conviction (see, e.g.: Richet, 1922), it is very likely that, in order to persuade him, Aksakof referred to the evidence obtained by Otero Acevedo, another inveterate materialist.

The Milan séances (1892) represented Richet's initiation into the scientific study of mediumistic phenomena. The prudent attitude that he maintained during the séances earned him the admiration and respect of Otero Acevedo. After the Milan sittings, he read the statements that Richet made for the newspaper *Il Secolo* with interest. There Richet affirmed the reality of Palladino's phenomena but gave no explanation for the cause. Several Spanish newspapers misrepresented his statements in such a way that it seemed that Richet was accusing the medium of fraud (see, e.g.: Anonymous, 1892). Outraged, Otero Acevedo (1895) sent a clipping from the newspaper *El Heraldo de Madrid* to Richet and asked if he wanted him to vindicate his persona. It is clear that he was seeking to expand his discourse,

position himself publicly in favour of Richet, and in turn, proclaim himself as an expert on psychical research.

The familiar tone of Richet's response shows that it was not the first time that he had written to Otero Acevedo. At the insistence of the latter, he reaffirmed that he had still not formed an opinion about the phenomena, but that they seemed curious to him and worth studying (Richet in: Otero Acevedo, 1895, p. 28).

Although Otero Acevedo did not specify it, it is likely that in his letter he took advantage of the opportunity to talk about his séances with Palladino in Naples (1888-89) and thereby transmit the value of his testimony to a new prestigious scientist.

In conclusion, the clay moulds episode shows that, in order to test the validity of the evidence, and thus the reality of psychic phenomena, the discourse in which this evidence was framed, based on the construction of an *irrefutable* testimony, was decisive. When Otero Acevedo obtained convincing evidence of the phenomena he had observed, he embarked on a series of strategies aimed at legitimising his testimony in the eyes of the savants to whom he wrote. Underpinning the evidence with a discourse focused on exalting his materialistic beliefs, as well as emphasising the conditions of control in which he had obtained the clay moulds, were effective ways of achieving his ends. Proof of this is that the evidence that was, a priori, less “spectacular”—the three fingers imprinted on a clay mould—was the one that impressed Aksakof the most. The reasons: that it had been obtained in broad daylight and presented by a self-styled “rabid materialist”.

5. Conclusions

In 1888, while spiritism celebrated its progress with the *First International Spiritist Congress*, Otero Acevedo, a newly graduated doctor was eager to study psychic phenomena from the experimental point of view. On learning of the challenge by Chiaia that Lombroso had refused, he saw his opportunity. In contrast to what historians have argued (see e.g.: Alvarado, 2011; Blondel, 2002; Brower, 2010; Inglis, 1989), Chiaia's challenge in 1888 may have not been the main cause of Lombroso's interest in Palladino in 1891. As Morselli believes (1908, Vol. 1, p. 135), Otero Acevedo's letters—where he displayed his initial scepticism—probably helped to

convince Lombroso about the importance of the medium. The scarcity of primary resources prevents me from drawing a clear conclusion with regard to this. If possible, further research should be undertaken in this direction.

In general terms, this case study makes it possible to reflect on the social mechanisms involved in the construction of authority in psychical research. For Otero Acevedo, being in contact with scientific authorities like Lombroso, as well as studying the “*diva des savants*” before other savants, was a way of vindicating himself as an expert on psychical research to other scientists. The fact that Otero Acevedo invited Lombroso to Naples reveals his intention to win the approval of such a scientific eminence, and thus establish himself as an “accredited” expert on the field. Despite failing to obtain the desired results with respect to Lombroso, he succeeded with regard to other authorities, such as Richet, and especially Aksakof. We should recall that the latter qualified one of the imprints of materialisations obtained by Otero Acevedo in broad daylight as “extraordinary”. As I have argued, at the time of organising the séances in Milan (1892), for Aksakof Otero Acevedo represented a greater expert on psychical research than Lombroso.

In this paper we have seen various strategies employed in order to legitimise mediumistic phenomena within the setting of the dominant positivist attitudes of the *fin-de-siècle*. First of all, I have highlighted the use of material evidence, like photographs or clay moulds, such as those obtained by Otero Acevedo with Palladino (Figure 2). As I have argued, appealing to the alleged objectivity of the evidence was not enough to assert the reality of the phenomena. The discourse that framed the evidence, based on the construction of an *irrefutable* testimony to the facts, was a determining factor in giving them credibility. Otero Acevedo was aware of this. Consequently, on presenting evidence to prestigious scientists, such as Lombroso, he referred to factors such as the conditions of control during the séances or his “strict materialism”. As in the case of spirit photography, the majority of scientists judged the “photographer” in preference to the photograph. Thus, making his testimony *irrefutable* allowed Otero Acevedo to advocate the alleged neutrality and objectivity of the clay moulds obtained with Palladino.

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Biographical statement

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Notes

¹ Scientific interest in mediumship is related to other subjects of psychological relevance at that time, such as child prodigies and geniuses. Not surprisingly, scientists who eventually became involved in psychical research, such as Lombroso and Richet, showed a deep interest in these topics. As Carson (2003) argues, researching “abnormal minds” —such as those of the mediums and the geniuses— was a promising way to help define normality and its opposite in psychological terms.

² They include members of the *Society for Psychical Research*, such as Henry Sidgwick, Frederic W. H. Myers and Oliver Lodge, Polish scientific authorities like Marie Curie or Julian Ochorowicz, and a number of renowned Italian psychiatrists, such as

Augusto Tamburini, Enrico Morselli, Filippo Botazzi and, obviously, Cesare Lombroso. In *Eusapia Palladino and her phenomena* (1909), the psychologist Hereward Carrington offers a panoramic view of the work of scientists with Palladino, from the séances in 1891 with Lombroso until 1909 with Carrington himself.

³ I refer to the *conversion* of Lombroso in italics because, as highlighted by Ystehede (2013), this was not evident until the end of his life, in 1909, and was not strictly a conversion to Kardecian spiritism—the dominant kind in Italy—, but spiritualist: he accepted the existence of the spirit but not other characteristics of the spiritist doctrine, such as reincarnation or the plurality of inhabited worlds in the universe. See also: Ferguson, 2007; Lombroso, 1909; Rock, 2013.

⁴ On the work of the *Society for Psychical Research* with Palladino, see especially: Oppenheim, 1985. On the research in the *Institut Général Psychologique* see, e.g.: Blondel, 2002; Brower, 2010; Lachapelle, 2011. Currently, Lorenzo Leporiere, from the Università degli Studi di Bari "Aldo Moro", is preparing a thesis on Palladino in relation to the Italian scientists who studied her, especially: Filippo Bottazzi, Enrico Morselli and Augusto Tamburini.

⁵ Otero Acevedo had planned to write four volumes of *Los espíritus*. For reasons that are unknown, he only wrote two (Castillo, 1922). The first volume (1893) is a historical review of spiritism. The second (1895) is based on the experiences of great men of science with renowned mediums, including Otero Acevedo with Palladino.

⁶ Although I do not know the origin of “la Sapio”, it is my understanding that “Sapio” is a play on the name “Eusapia Palladino” and “la” is the feminine definite article in Italian, equivalent to “the” in English. In my opinion, most historians have ignored this nickname for two reasons. First, because it pertains to the early years of Palladino’s career which, as I have stressed, are not well documented. Second, because it is only present in Italian sources and hardly used at all by non-Italian historians.

⁷ This would be the case of María Sala, the medium of physical phenomena that the famous Spanish spiritist Viscount of Torres-Solanot (1840-1902) brought to light in his book *La médium de las flores* [The medium of the flowers] (1895).

⁸ Morselli met Lombroso in Turin at the end of 1870. His interest in psychic phenomena was influenced by positivism and psychopathology. In 1908, he published *Psicologia e "spiritismo": Impressioni e note critiche sui fenomeni medianici di Eusapia Palladino* [sic], a psychological study about mediumship, written in two volumes and based on his séances with Palladino (Genoa, 1901-02, 1906-07). For further information, see: Brancaccio, 2014; Morselli, 1908.

⁹ On contemplating the photographs, many people saw a strong resemblance between the spirit and the medium. To prove that they were not the same person, Crookes tried to photograph them together. He only achieved this on one occasion. However, in the picture the position of Katie King prevents the viewer from seeing the medium's face (Brock, 2008).

¹⁰ In March 1848, in the house of the Fox family in Hydesville (New York) they began to hear a series of noises. The couple's two youngest daughters devised a rapping code to communicate with what they believed was a spirit. This episode contributed to the development of modern spiritualism in the United States (Moore, 1977).

¹¹ On the problem of the subconscious personalities in spiritism, and especially, on the influence of Janet in this respect see, e.g.: Bacopoulos-Viau, 2012; Carroy & Plas, 2000; Graus, 2014; LeBlanc, 2001.

¹² Palladino's attitude changed over the years, and according to some scientists, such as the psychologist Hugo Münsterberg, her manners worsened with fame, turning her into a capricious medium with a tendency to generate scandals. On Münsterberg and Palladino, see, especially: Sommer, 2012a.

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