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THE GUARULHOS POLTERGEIST: A REASSESSMENT OF ANDRADE'S (1984) MONOGRAPH

by MICHEL-ANGE AMORIM

ABSTRACT

A presentation is made of an RSPK investigation conducted over several years, in the suburbs of São Paulo, Brazil. A monograph describing the case, and interpretations of the phenomena, was published in Portuguese by H. G. Andrade and his collaborators at the IBPP, in 1984. Based on the phenomena reported during the interviews of family members and other witnesses, Andrade interprets the case in terms of discarnate agents and black magic rites. The purpose of the present pages is to describe the Guarulhos poltergeist in some detail, and to explore an alternative interpretation of the phenomena, one based upon the living agent hypothesis, and related factors, such as religious context, expectancies, and possible personality disorders.

While recently some Western authors, from foreign countries seem to be more and more interested in 'Brazilian Psi'¹ whether from a clinical, anthropological or research perspective, some local investigators are also active in the field. For 50 years H. G. Andrade, director of the Brazilian Institute of Psychobiophysical Research (IBPP), and his collaborators have dealt primarily with spontaneous cases like poltergeists. In 1984 he published an extensive review of a case, taking place in the Greater São Paulo, in a monograph entitled 'O Poltergeist de Guarulhos'. Andrade and his collaborators did not witness the RSPK events themselves but visited the family 7 times (between 1973 and 1984) and collected about 6 hours of tapes from various witnesses, some of whom were members of the family and some not. They also took numerous photographs of damaged objects and people who had been physically attacked. The aim of this paper is to present this RSPK case, apparently rich in macro-PK events, to the larger parapsychological community and also to present alternative interpretations of the reported events. As we shall see, Andrade opts for a 'spiritist' account; yet the living agent hypothesis, which he considers 'a reductionist hypothesis' (p. 69), may be more parsimonious.

The investigated poltergeist is of special interest on several accounts. First, the disturbances extended over a period of 11 years (a chronological summary will follow outlining the main events). Second, they seemed to follow part of the family despite several relocations. Finally the RSPK case involved particularly dramatic phenomena, like spontaneous fires, apports, possession trances, apparitions and cut phenomena on furniture and persons.

THE PROTAGONISTS

Marcos a plumber, aged 29 years, inhabitant of Guarulhos.
Noêmia his 21 year old wife, the mother of baby Ruth (18 months).

¹ In Brazil, there is a relative absence of the academic, secular parapsychology of North America and Western Europe, and instead the rival schools of the Catholic Church and the Spiritist movement dominate the field of parapsychology. For an analysis of this situation, see Hess (1987).

Pedro	father of Marcos, a builder and amateur exorcist, aged 55, who lives with his family in a house on the back plot of Marcos's house.
Judite	Pedro's wife, aged 54, the mother of three daughters and two sons whose ages range from 11 to 20, none of them are married.
Eliza	a 15 year old girl who came to stay with Marcos family.
Adauri	a 16 year old boy who witnessed some of the incidents.
Antônia	a married woman and a Catholic who lives next door to the Marcos family.
The parents of Noêmia Lamartine Ribeiro	who live in Artur Alvim.
Maria	minister of the Pentecostal Church (Assembleia de Deus) to which the Marcos family belongs. his wife.

as well. They stopped after the intervention of the Church minister. But, in mid-September 1976, after four months of calm other phenomena began to recur sporadically (throwing of objects and stones, disappearance of money, spontaneous fires and Ruth's possession fits). These grew suddenly in intensity during a two week stay of a 15 year old girl (named Elza) with the family; she also contracted the possession-fits. Finally (beginning October 1976), following an especially troubled night, the family asked for help from the Church and from Pedro, and, apparently, an effective exorcism ended the outbreaks.

From this day on (Stage 4) until the seventh and last interview of the witnesses by Andrade and his collaborators on 21 April, 1984, the only occurrences noted were an occasional disappearance of money and the movement of objects. Meanwhile Pedro died on 29 July, 1979. The disturbances seemed to have definitively ceased when Noêmia had a vision of an invisible assailant (not dated), and had a dialogue with him; as a result of this 'encounter' she decided to adopt a more spiritual life style.

CHRONOLOGICAL LANDMARKS

The first set of disturbances (Stage 1) started on 27 April, 1973 and ended, apparently by itself, on 1 May, 1973. It consisted mainly of the cutting of furniture and of monster-like apparitions. The focus of the poltergeist activity was Marcos's family.

The second set of events (Stage 2) started at the end of April 1974 with the stoning of the house and the cutting of people, and ended on 25 October, 1974. In the meantime Pedro and his family moved temporarily to Guaianazes leaving only Marcos, Noêmia and Ruth in the front house. However, Pedro did return to Guarulhos to do an exorcism against the 'invisible agent' which seemed to stop all RSPK phenomena there for two months. In the same period Marcos, Noêmia (pregnant at the time) and Ruth went to Noêmia's parents home (in Artur Alvim) where the troubles began again (cutting phenomena, the disappearance of money and breakage of objects). After the birth of their second child Raquel (3 July) they left the house in August and stayed some days in Pedro's house in Guaianazes before returning to a new house in Guarulhos. After two weeks of peace some of the RSPK phenomena resumed, consisting essentially of Ruth going into possession-like trances. Marcos, who took a job for one month in Taubaté, left his family in Suzano at Noêmia's sister's home; the outbreaks continued here too. On an especially troubled night (involving movements of objects, etc.) the family decided to return to their house in Guarulhos. However once again the RSPK outbreaks continued to occur. Finally they decided to go to the Church and ask for help: an evangelic exorcism was performed in the family's home, and the phenomena ceased.

The third set of events (Stage 3) began on 28 March, 1975 and consisted of movements, breakages, removing and 'apports' of objects and of stoning. On 30 August, 1975 Marcos's family moved into a new house (the third) located in Guarulhos which Marcos himself had built with his father; nevertheless 'apport'-like phenomena involving rosemary branches continued to occur.

REPORTED PHENOMENA

(1) *Cutting phenomena.* Stage 1 began with extensive parallel cuts in the upholstery of the furniture and in the mattresses, as if these were being ripped apart by a pocket knife or enormous claws. Initially, it was thought that the cuts were being produced by a three year old boy, Pedro's grandson. The little boy was taken away, but the activity didn't stop (p. 4). The phenomenon happened either in the presence or in the absence of people. The opening of the upholstery was witnessed at least by: 'Pedro (p. 5), Noêmia (p. 5), and Adauri—a boy (sixteen) from the outside (p. 7); none of them could see who or what was producing the cuts. In Stage 2, cuts were found many times in the form of a cross, on pillows, clothes hung out, purses, slippers, blankets—even those folded in the wardrobe—on Marcos's document case (p. 12) and on two Bibles (pp. 26-27); but in these cases the cuts were not witnessed while they occurred. People also began to be cut. Marcos awoke with his left arm bleeding on 2 May, 1974 (between 2 and 3 a.m.). On the same afternoon, an 18 months old daughter of a friend's wife was cut on the calf of her leg (pp. 14-15) while she was inside the house with Ruth, at the bedroom doorway and the adults were chatting in the yard. From this day on (Stage 2), Marcos suffered one more cut on the left side of his forehead whereas Noêmia had her face cut practically every morning. These cuts were extremely thin, three or four at a time, and she noticed them by feeling a burning sensation on her face (pp. 15-16). During the time the family stayed in Guaianazes (August 1974) Noêmia had her face repeatedly cut while she went at night to Pedro's Church. On October 1974 another child suffered a deep cut in his thigh, while his mother was praying with Noêmia in the bedroom of Marcos's house in Guarulhos. They looked for a blade on the bed where the boy sat but didn't find one (pp. 27-29). In Stages 3 & 4 no such phenomena occurred.

(2) *Apparition phenomena* occurred during the entire RSPK case under different forms. In Stage 1, during one cutting event Pedro stated he had the vision of the forearm of a wild beast, a monster, not a man. It was very strong and big; sharp-ended claws, measuring 10 cm, black, shiny and curved. The fur was

red, thin, shiny and short as that of a cougar' (p. 4). Noêmia, while feeling some shivers, saw a shadowy form, an animal similar to a gorilla. Pedro called his neighbours, Mrs. 'Zina' and her husband, in order to witness the cuts. The woman was quite skeptical. But as she was questioning Noêmia about the apparition, she saw an enormous hand passing in front of her and she fainted. She declared having seen in the twinkling of an eye this hairy and dark thing, dark brown like a monkey fur. She didn't notice any claws but the fingers seemed quite long to her (pp. 5-6).

During the Stage 2 incidents Noêmia perceived, on three occasions, a wolfhound shape on the wardrobe as she went to sleep while Marcos only felt some shivers. She also stated having seen a hairy hand trying to seize her husband by his neck (pp. 59-61). In Stage 2 at the same moment as Marcos had his left arm cut (2 May, 1974) Noêmia saw a 'hairy beast, like a cougar, or it was a gorilla, a monkey', something horrible with a face in fire and big teeth (p. 11). In Stage 3 she saw once a shape passing in the house towards the bedroom where after this Marcos was hit by a brick as they prayed there (pp. 44-46). And in Stage 4 according to Marcos (pp. 67-68) she started 'to have a dialogue with the entity, in the guise of Satan, of a man, with a totally distorted face, teeth outside, and throwing fire when he spoke'. Ruth, during the period of her fits, also described having seen a beast, a cat, a dog (p. 21). In Stage 3 she still saw it and Raquel (2 years) said she saw a horse (p. 37) which description corresponds with the one the sensitives of the Church gave during an evangelic exorcism in the house by reporting the presence of an animal shape 'in the form of a horse' (p. 62). On another occasion (Stage 2), as Pedro was praying with his wife and their son-in-law, he saw 'a figure 1.5 m high, with a strong thorax, in a not black color, but half-caste, very dark' two meters from them (p. 55). Finally Pedro led a 'magical struggle' against an invisible assailant (May 1974), one abundantly described in the monograph (pp. 50-56). He claimed indeed having won this struggle by killing the entity with an 'imaginary' sword, all this while in a trance-like state: which Pedro considered to be 'the management of God Spirit' (p. 55).

(3) *Possession-like trances* began in Stage 2, two weeks after the moving of Marcos's family into their new house (the second) in Guarulhos. At 2 a.m. Ruth woke up very scared saying that she was seeing beasts on the wardrobe, a wild cat, a dog (p. 21). From this day on the child would have attacks, once or twice a day. She would become speechless and her face would turn purple. She was taken to a hospital where an EEG was made, but nothing abnormal was found: no signs of epilepsy. In Stage 3, Ruth (now four years old) still had her fits; during these her face, hands and feet would become twisted. Again she screamed that she had seen a dog, a cat (p. 37). Later during Elza's stay in the family (September 1976) she too displayed the possession symptoms; her eyes and face would seem to become contorted (p. 38). Of interest here is that when Ruth was at her grandmother's home, she had no such fits; similarly, Elza showed no abnormal behaviour outside Marcos's house (p. 67).

400 and 700 g. According to Pedro 'the stones didn't seem to be thrown but dropped on the house'. In February 1975, during this interview, Pedro estimated that about 20 kg of such materials had been taken off the roof (p. 9). Witnesses could only perceive the stones when these were over the roof, at approximately one meter from the tiles; they never actually saw a trajectory of these stones. In Stage 3 (11 April, 1975) a fall of stones began at 11 a.m., consisting of 26 fragments of gravels and bricks of which some (2 or 3) landed on the neighbour's side. Mrs. Antônia, the (catholic) neighbour, thought it was a kid who was throwing the stones, Marcos 'knew' it was not but didn't want to argue with her (pp. 33-34). Marcos noted that the intensification of the phenomena coincided with the detonations of a distant quarry, but the stones were not coming from there (p. 33). On some occasions stones hit people: Marcos was hit as he repaired the roof in Stage 2 (p. 11) and on another occasion, while he was in his bedroom (p. 37); Elza was hit twice, while she was in the house in Stage 3, 28 March, 1975 (p. 30). Finally some of the missionaries of the Church, after an exorcism (October 1976) in stage 3, were also hit (p. 41). Marcos noted however that these stonings of people didn't actually hurt anyone (p. 37).

(5) *Movements of objects* really began in Stage 2 while Marcos's family still lived in the front house of Guarulhos. After a knock in the wall, pieces of broken cups and glasses were found on the floor (p. 18). The phenomenon continued in Noêmia's parents home, where on a wall was 'the mark of a glass broken there in a corner' (p. 19). In Suzano also (Stage 2) objects were broken or thrown, like a Bible (p. 22). As stated by Pedro, during the outbreaks they used to read Psalm 91, then the Bible was removed from its place and was thrown (p. 26). Once (28 March, 1975), as Elza was handing Raquel to Noêmia, a purse left the closed drawer of the dressing-table in the bedroom and hit the back of the adolescent (p. 30). The same afternoon (at 3 p.m.) the family was in the kitchen praying with their Church Minister, Lamartine Ribeiro and his wife Maria when a glass, among other cups and glasses, left a basin and crashed near Maria's feet. As the two guests were going, a Bible placed on a little table, among other books, 'jumped' and fell on the floor (pp. 30-31). In Stage 2 as the disturbances continued in the new house in Guarulhos, Marcos witnesses his shoe levitate and forcefully hit the bedroom ceiling stucco where it left a mark and then fell on the bed; this occurred several times during the night (pp. 21-22). In Stage 1 the front door lock broke twice while the key was removed from it (p. 8). At the beginning of October 1976, as the family returned (8 p.m.) from Marcos's parents home, during this short journey, 'an invisible agent' seemed to pursue them and taunt them by overturning Noêmia's bag on the floor, pulling Marcos's purse and throwing it in the sewer. When they arrived home a stoning began while Raquel screamed (p. 40). After an exorcism (end of Stage 3) as the missionaries walked out of the house, a glass was thrown, hit the back of one of them and then crashed on the ground (p. 41). On 20 April, 1975, part of Noêmia's family visited her. As everybody was in the couple's bedroom one of five cups left the next room, went through the window—people inferred—then hit a bed, jumped below the radio set and crashed on the floor (pp. 32-33). As stated by Andrade 'breakage of cups and glasses coming out of closed cupboards was common. But nobody succeeded in seeing the things taken out and damaged. They only heard

(4) *Stoning of the house* was the first occurrence of Stage 2. It typically occurred in the daytime till 7 or 8 p.m. It consisted of a fall of stones, bricks, gravels, etc.

the noise when they fell down and crashed! During prayers such occurrences were common' (p. 32).

(6) 'Apport'-like phenomena seemed to occur during the whole poltergeist case. Disappearance of money was especially frequent. Once (Stage 1) they found in its place a piece of paper with a red cross drawn on it (p. 8). Sometimes, after a certain period (the same day or some days later) a part of the 'stolen' money or all of it would reappear (Stage 2) in places hard to get to, following a knock on the wall (pp. 18, 31-32). At Artur Alvim (Stage 2), money which had been taken was ostensibly thrown (folded in a paper red on one side and white on the other) on the floor near the sink in the kitchen where the mother-in-law, the spouse of Marcos and he himself were present. As Andrade states 'the money was thrown on the floor or on some furniture, within everybody's sight; but it wasn't seen from where nor how it came' (p. 20). In Stage 3 Elza's purse disappeared and was found some days later at the roadside near the house, with all her documents but without the money (pp. 42-43). Marcos noted that the money didn't disappear if he kept it with him in his pocket or at his mother's home (p. 36). In Stage 2 branches of rosemary also appeared (May 1974) in Marcos's jacket pockets and on the window sill (pp. 12-13). Some months after (August 1974) when they moved into their second house, Marcos found under the bed some plates which had disappeared in the first house; then the poltergeist activity began again (p. 20). In Stage 3 when they first moved into their third house (September 1975) they found crossed knives and rosemary (the plant) under their bed and the mattress (pp. 46-49). These occurrences ceased after the Church minister's intervention but recommenced two months later. They also found in the same period lit white candles in their bedroom (pp. 35-36). This coincided with the visit of two women who came twice to bless the house, but Noêmia didn't let them come in the house. Once Noêmia saw that one of these unknown persons had white candles and rosemary in her transparent bag (pp. 46-49).

(7) *Spontaneous fires* also occurred during the poltergeist events. In Stage 2 (May 1974) two floor-polishers (their own and the neighbours') exploded into flames while Noêmia and Judite were using them. Marcos stated that it wasn't a short-circuit (p. 13). While the whole family had definitely left the first house in Guarulhos, Marcos had left behind some of his belongings. Included among these were his working tools and materials and a bedside table; these latter caught fire (Stage 2, n.d.) while nothing belonging to the new occupants had been touched. They claimed to have perceived the fire when Marcos's belongings were already completely burned (p. 25). At about the same time, Pedro, living in Guainazes, was told by a sensitive that she saw in the bedside table a 'bad element' (p. 26). The first 'true' parapyrogenesis (PPG) occurred, during the family's stay at Artur Alvim, behind a meat safe. It was Marcos's father-in-law who ran up and extinguished the fire (p. 20). Some clothes within a closed wardrobe (p. 42, n.d.) also caught fire in that house. In the third Marcos's house in Guarulhos (Stage 3) PPG often occurred behind the wardrobe where some newspapers were kept, which were the fire target (pp. 35-36) near Marcos's tools (p. 42).

(8) *Noêmia's strange dream* (p. 44). In Stage 3 (summer 1976) Noêmia dreamt one night about having one of her teeth (an incisor) pulled with the help of her husband. Next morning her tooth was really missing. She found it later whole with half-root red (sic)!

ANDRADE'S INTERPRETATION OF THE PHENOMENA AND ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES

Andrade interprets the different types of occurrences present in this case as supportive of a spiritist world view in the Umbanda tradition. The Umbanda religion has several million adherents especially in the bigger cities. It combines African, Catholic, Indian, and spiritist elements and may be characterized as a relatively recent extra-ecclesiastic consolidation of popular Catholicism with ancient Afro-Brazilian sects. Some authors (Greenfield, 1987; Bronson, 1986; Montagno, 1985) have recently emphasized the importance of this Brazilian Spiritist tradition healing practices both within and outside hospitals.

Andrade accepts (p. 63 . . .) the central belief of this religion, i.e., the existence of all sorts of spirits like Exus and Umulums (Pagliuchi, 1974a & 1974b); he also believes that the sorcerer would be able to employ magic practices within the 'terreiros' (place specialized in these procedures) to trouble someone according to Quimbanda laws (black magic side of Umbanda). Thus, he rejects the usual attribution of RSPK outbreaks to a living agency. In defense of his position he points to the fact that a psychological examination of Noêmia, the most probable RSPK agent, was conducted by two psychologists belonging to the IBPP team². He states 'Mrs Noêmia didn't display any form of psychical abnormality that could justify viewing her as belonging to the 'psychokinetic agent of a poltergeist' category, in conformity with the theoretical patterns suggested by the current hypotheses' (p. 70). He adds that his macro-PK tests (which are described below) of her capacities were also negative (p. 71).

(1) For Andrade there's little doubt that the cutting of people and furniture is the result of a disruptive discarnate agent able to interact with objects of our world (pp. 73-76). This is the only case investigated by the IBPP presenting such phenomena (Andrade, 1988) but in five of the 116 cases reviewed by Roll (1977) 'one or more persons were wounded or slapped by some unknown agency or stigmata appeared on their bodies' (p. 397).

But let us consider other 'explanations': the first cuts on the furniture happening in the absence of people could have been the result of fraud, yet have led to a growing expectancy from the occupants of the house. This expectancy based upon apparent PK could, in turn, have led to some genuine PK phenomena—the cutting actually witnessed by people. The psychodynamics here would be analogous to the one reported by Batchelder (1984) and others, in case of a collective PK agency, whereby the 'fuzziness' of the situation contributes to the evocation of true paranormal phenomena.

² In a recent letter exchange, Andrade (1989) specified that Dr. Julika Kishos (one of the two psychologists) used Pfister's projective test, involving a judgement of color preferences. It is claimed that the test, which doesn't demand highly developed verbal skills, gives a 'normative' assessment of the individual's personality. According to Dr. Kishos 'the patient didn't show significant personality differences from the person in her socio-economic-cultural environment'.

The use of the Batcheldorian framework seems appropriate for several reasons:

(a) 'Belief' in psi (or the supernatural), a necessary psychological condition, is present since Pentecostal churches emphasize Spiritual Gifts (charismata) such as glossolalia, prophetic utterance, healing, etc. (Gentz, 1986).

(b) In Stage 1, some individuals in the Church (including the daughter of Pedro) had 'a message from the Holy Spirit' (p. 54) warning of the occurrence of a future 'great event' in Pedro's family, in which there would be blood. This itself could have established an expectancy set (Hastings & Krippner, 1961) for 'bleeding' events (e.g., cutting of people in Stage 2).

(c) The absence of an epicentre of the phenomena (a PK-agent) may have freed members of the family from 'ownership resistance' (the reluctance to identify oneself as the source of a paranormal event); the protagonists of the present case tended to attribute the RSPK events to supernatural (spiritual or magic-related) intervention.

The cutting of Noêmia could have been either hypnotically-induced self-mutilations (Malon et al., 1987) or stigmata. Implicit and explicit suggestions are part of the Batcheldorian framework (Isaacs, 1984) and group hypnosis, which is expectancy-related, can lead to psychosomatic changes (Azuma & Stevenson, 1988). As we shall see in item (2) hypnosis may well have played a role in the present case. And Marcos's cut on his arm, while he was sleeping (Stage 2), may itself have been caused by Noêmia, while she was in a dissociated state; the fact that she had a vision of a supernatural creature immediately after supports this 'dissociative' interpretation.

(2) For Andrade, the apparitions and visions reinforce the Spiritist explanation (pp. 50-65). Right from the start of the monograph (p. 4) he writes that 'some (people) saw enormous claws belonging to a strange being, perhaps an inhabitant of another dimension', referring to the fashionable fourth dimension idea (Rucker, 1984). He uses the idea of lycanthropy to account for the transformation of these spirits into the witnessed black dogs, gorilla, cougar . . . ; given that the first descriptions of the monster coincide with those of an Umbandist author he cites (p. 68). However lycanthropy—the reputed ability of certain individuals to take on the external form of a wild animal—has been largely demystified by Rawcliffe (1959)³ and Andrade chooses not to discuss the question of the reality and of the presumably crucial issue of the origin of such beliefs (p. 57). Andrade does refer to the ectoplasmic materializations produced by the 1920's European mediums (pp. 64-65), but finally opts for the discarnate agent explanation.

From a psychological perspective one must note that the apparitions had the characteristics of eidetic imagery⁴ (EI), i.e., they were autonomous, constructive and dynamic, displaying natural progressions and movement. The fact that they weren't collectively witnessed (e.g., Marcos never saw one) points to the subjective (rather than consensual) nature of the experience.

In the case of Noêmia, we can notice that she was predisposed to such an event since at the age of 17 she already experienced it. She indeed often saw a black, big dog on her bedside; she would shout for help from her mother and when the light would be turned on there would be nothing. As we have seen this particular vision recurred during the RSPK events years later (cf. the wolfhound shape on the wardrobe, Stage 2). Of course in the case of Noêmia, these visions seem at times to have been quite elaborate, as in her dialogue with the 'Satanic creature' (Stage 4). However this latter fact could simply underline her proneness to fantasy or dissociation (Marks, 1988). Similarly, Pedro's struggle against the 'monster' could have been the result of expectancies, autosuggestion or dissociation. It is conceivable that his choice to become an exorcist was motivated by a dissociative personality syndrome similar to Noêmia's.

If in this poltergeist case there really was a sorcery component, as seems reasonable to suppose (p. 12), then we can hypothesize that the sorcerer, via MOBIA⁵ (Mental or Behavioral Influence of an Agent), contributed to the triggering of EI in the witnesses' minds. Insofar as eidetic images are evoked by a thought, suggestion, idea, or memory image (Marks & McKellar, 1982) it seems plausible to entertain that they could be evoked by a 'psi-based' idea, also especially when such images are consistent with the culturally shared stereotypes of the people involved (Evans, 1984). The work of Janet, Richet, Myers and Vasiliev about telepathic or PK-induced hypnosis (Leloup, 1978) and the presence of a particular expectancy set are helpful in accounting for such events.

However it would have been interesting to conduct a quantitative investigation of the recurrent apparition (Maher & Schmeidler, 1975) in order to bring more useful information.

(3) The possession symptoms of the children remind Andrade of the mediumistic 'incorporation' of spirits frequenting 'Quimbanda sessions'⁶ (Exu & Umulum). As he put it 'By our personal experience in this field (more than 50 years of observation in mediumistic sessions), we have strong reasons to support such an occurrence' (p. 66). Lack of evidence for epilepsy in the EEG examination certainly is consistent with the spiritist interpretation. Moreover the symptoms displayed by the victimized children don't point to a specific physiologically-based neuropathology of spiritual possession (Beyerstein, 1988).

Still, alternative explanations are possible. It could be that the 'possession' symptoms constitute a culture-bound neurotic disorder, as suggested by Ward &

³ 'In Africa such beliefs have been turned to hideous advantage by secret societies. [. . .] Such secret societies were often cannibalistic—they practiced devouring parts of the human anatomy such as the heart, eyes and liver and the more tender parts of the flesh. The trails leading away from the scene of the crime would be those of a hyena or leopard or crocodile, but after some distance the tracks of human feet would supplant them to leave no doubt that it was the leopard-men or hyena-men who had been at work. The terror created by such methods in the minds of the primitive blacks can well be imagined' (p. 263).

⁴ EI is defined as any mental imagery projected onto the sensory environment which cannot be attributed to a material change in sensory input and which is known to the imager to be subjective. The relevant work of Marks & McKellar (1982) applies the concept of EI to account for reports of apparitions collected by Sidgwick, Gurney and Myers.

⁵ Term suggested by Rex G. Stanford (1974) as a new term for 'active-agent telepathy'. He proposes that the agent can play an active role in telepathy and that such 'telepathy' is really a form of psychokinesis. MOBIA is regarded and the most common PMIR function of PK.

⁶ Quimbanda is a form of spiritism practiced in Brazilian Umbanda, see Figge (1975).

Beaubrun's (1981) psycho-anthropological investigation of spirit possession in a West Indian Pentecostal group. Besides the authors noted: 'It is significant that the Pentecostals themselves view possession as spiritual disorder and offer treatment by means of exorcism'⁷.

Or, we could adopt E. Bourguignon's (1976) stress on the therapeutic component of possession trances, the 'cathartic aspects of the experience'. In the present case, the interpersonal event of the possession trances could be a culturally (Pentecostalism) sanctioned method of conflict resolution related to the persons involved (Marcos's family) and the situation (RSPK outbreaks).

However that may be, in a recent article Pattison *et al.* (1986) described a variety of trance and possession states, in terms of modes of consciousness, behavioral manifestations, and contextual interpretations. They concluded that 'such states, per se, are not pathological, but may be experienced and interpreted as either normal or pathological personal experiences'.

(4) Andrade, by citing another case (p. 33), stressed the fact that 'strong noise' seems to stimulate the RSPK activity. Another interesting fact is that the stones hitting the persons didn't hurt them: in many RSPK cases this seems to be a frequently related effect (Roll, 1977)⁸. Stone-throwing RSPK episodes are not rare and can even constitute the main occurrence of a poltergeist (Rogo, 1987). This is quite interesting, for throughout human history (and particularly in the monotheistic religions) stoning has been related to punishment. Likewise here, Pedro explained (February 1975) the disturbances as a punishment of his son who was 'drifting away from Evangelical principles' (p. 53), this was 'revealed by visions' before. But later (October 1976) Marcos was persuaded by sensitives of his Church and by certain clues that a 'trabalho' (magic work) had been done against his family (p. 72). However, if we consider Pedros's interpretation of the events, the stone-throwing symbolic occurrence makes much sense. Especially if we agree that 'paranormal phenomena correspond to or have some relation with laws associated with symbolic language' (McCully, 1981). It should be added that Stage 3 started on Good Friday with a stoning: is that simply a coincidence or is that laden with meaning? If genuine one can classify such events as a 'classical' RSPK phenomenon, if not its symbolic aspect remains of importance. Of course it's understandable that Andrade would infer that the stones flung at people involved an 'invisible agent', a stone-thrower. Surely such inferences are not sufficient ground to invoke a spiritist explanation. After all, Andrade's remark that 'nobody succeeded in seeing the trajectory of the targeted damaged objects' points to trickery.

(5) On the other hand we must not forget that sometimes people did directly witness moving objects phenomena, e.g., Marcos's 'shoe levitation' (Stage 2), the 'invisible agent' pursuit of Marcos's family at night, and especially the 'crockery-throwing episode' with the Church Minister and his wife Maria. The fact that here the Bibles seem to be focal objects (Roll, 1977) is interesting:

⁷ For a brief account of the issue of exorcism in the present case, the Reader should refer to Alvarado (1985).

⁸ 'Objects are often flung about with great violence, but people are rarely hurt. The missiles may seem to be aimed at someone, and to move with great speed, but they usually hit light objects' (p. 396).

the two books were moved and cut on different occasions. Pedro attributed this to the fact that they used to read Psalm 91 'a powerful prayer in the fight against such kinds of disturbance'. Andrade quotes another case with persons belonging to an evangelical sect too: the poltergeist 'pulled out and just removed the page containing Psalm 91' (p. 27). Such a focal object is predictable in a family where the Evangelical principles outline the conduct of all members!

According to Andrade such macro-PK events were the product of a discarnate agency; but it's curious to see how Noêmia's failures at showing any PKMB ability (while the family was watching a TV show presenting Uri Geller) or of some PK influence upon a compass are interpreted by him as proof that she could not be the RSPK agent, though he states that 'this single session with negative results is meaningless' (p. 71). Anyway even if there was really no epicentre or focal person here, one could explain the witnessed movement of objects phenomena by an unconscious PK collective agency (Owen & Sparrow, 1976).

(6) In Andrade's perspective the 'apport' phenomena suggest that 'the incorporeal agent has direct access to any 'place of our space' (p. 74) from its own parallel dimension. The last events, with the two visiting women and their 'materials', are very suggestive of evil action at a distance by means of sorcery, according to him. On the other hand, it may suggest more mundane happenings. The women's second visit coincided with Ruth's birthday (4 October, 1976). They came back trying to enter the house by offering a piece of cake for Noêmia and the children (p. 47) but unsuccessfully. This points to their precise knowledge of the family's life. The two women didn't belong to the same Church. During their first visit indeed they came by saying that 'someone' had sent them to bless the house (p. 46), and Noêmia refused to let them in, for in her Church they anoint, they do not bless. It seems plausible that the women had some precise knowledge of the family's life, and may have been behind some of the seemingly paranormal phenomena. The similarity with other cases investigated by the IBPP led Andrade to the sorcery-related conclusion, even while stating 'we're aware of the unorthodox aspect of such an assumption, which could incur discredit for this work' (p. 49). Certainly there is some evidence for a sorcery component in this case, as suggested by the appearance of rosemary, used in sorcery rituals (p. 12). But to state that the appearance of crossed knives, plants and lit candles are really the result of teleportation, simply because Marcos asserts that this occurred while the house was closed and nobody could enter, is to underestimate the possibilities of skeleton keys or the dexterity of certain housebreakers! After all despite being so categorical Marcos couldn't explain on this occasion the incense smell he found when coming into his house (p. 49).

During these apport-like events, the fact that a knock in the wall preceded the ostensibly paranormal events (p. 18) is interesting, being consistent with Roll (1977) suggesting that 'a greater number of [RSPK] cases with movements were preceded by sound'. As for the disappearance of money or of Elza's purse or of some plates (which had disappeared in the first house and were found in the second, p. 20), there could be other explanations than teleportation. Even if Andrade states that no one in Pedro's family could pick up the money because they all are strictly brought up in accordance with the evangelical precepts'

(p. 8). If Noêmia did have dissociative episodes, we could suppose that, while in a dissociated state, she could have 'spirited away' the properties and returned them after a time; given an amnesia between the dissociated personality and Noêmia's normal self, this seems quite plausible. At any rate for the events which were not directly witnessed, if we dismiss the RSPK perspective, then the one responsible for this kind of occurrence could easily be an outsider: e.g., a 'sorcerer' . . .

(7) It's curious to notice that the first PPG-like events took the appearance of two floor-polishers breakdowns, one of which belonged to the neighbour. If we disregard the short-circuit possibility as did Marcos (p. 13), this event plus the breaking of the front door's lock (p. 8) twice are suggestive of the presence of (one or more) malfunction-linked person(s) (MLP) in the family. And what a coincidence, it was then Noêmia who was using the machine with Judite! Of course situational stress, like in the present case, tends to favour MLP activity (Morris, 1986). However, there seems to be legitimate PPG cases: for example, the 'Suzano poltergeist' case attested by police officers (Andrade, 1982) and which has been recently reviewed by Carlos S. Alvarado (1984). But, contrary to that case, in the present one—where the PPG events are still, for Andrade (p. 12), 'blackmagic related'—the actual initiation of the fire was not directly witnessed (except with the machines): that's where his interpretation stumbles; because there could be here a possibility of fraud, conscious (the 'sorcerer') or not (Noêmia—or someone else—possible dissociative episodes).

It should be noted that, in 12 of the 32 cases (37%) directly studied by the IBPP, PPG occurred (Andrade, 1988).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

One wonders whether there are any cases as complicated and dramatic as the present one. In fact, Gauld & Cornell (1979) quoted two cases with no apparent sorcery component: the Naples (1696–7) and the Rerrick (1695) cases, where, among other disturbances, there occurred apport phenomena of diverse kinds, incendiary phenomena, persons were hurt by an invisible assailant, phantasms were seen, and, in the Naples case, the subject talked with a demon 'dressed in white with a face the colour of fire' (p. 162) almost as did Noêmia! Two other cases presented a sorcery component: the Fewston (1621–2) and the Bristol (1761–2) cases, where witches claimed responsibility for the death of children who were subjected to divers bodily afflictions.

Another well-known case is that of Eleonore Zugun (1925–7) investigated by Harry Price. Eleonore was a Rumanian girl victimized by a poltergeist in a manner similar to what happened to Noêmia, i.e., scratching (and biting) her skin. The RSPK activity (stone-throwing, removal or delivery of apported objects . . .) also followed her wherever she went, from Vienna to London and right into Price's own laboratory (Price, 1926).

More recently, the Mulhouse case (1977–81), France, investigated by Hans Bender and his team (Bender & Jacquey, 1984) presented similar characteristics to the Guarulhos's. There were also apparitions (of a black shape), cuts on a person and on sheets, moving of books including a Bible, disappearance of money and of papers that were found under a mattress in the new family house, etc.

If we consider now the whole Guarulhos case in the light of Stevenson's (1972) pattern analysis devised in order to help the investigator discriminate living from discarnate agents, we may find a kind of mixing between effects supposed to belong to both types of agency (pp. 248–249). Indeed, features belonging to the discarnate agency occurred: heavy objects e.g., stones and bricks were moved, sometimes in a complicated trajectory (cf. Noêmia's family visit), movements of objects suggested purpose (e.g., throwing a brick or a glass at someone), a subject (e.g., Noêmia) was the object of destructive and injuring impulses, there was a communication (of Noêmia) with an apparent discarnate personality, phenomena were localized around family members and places (e.g., PPG in the first house though the family had moved) and exorcism offered several times as a resolution of the physical disturbances (e.g., in the first house after the struggle of Pedro with the 'monster' during Marcos's family stay there). Features belonging to the living agency also occurred: the short range of distance over which objects were moved, breakage of objects were common, they seemed to land forcefully, there was no meaningful communication by raps, collective apparitional phenomena didn't occur and phenomena seemed to be localized around a particular person (Noêmia).

Some would say that to resort to the Batcheldorian framework and to MOBIA in the present case is basically speculative. But one must wonder how such a complex case, with neither a specific living nor a discarnate agency pattern, could be explained otherwise, especially if we dismiss a massive fraud as a hypothesis (Hyman, 1989). It's worth noting that this RSPK case is clearly laden with a psi-conductive religious and magic content (Winkelman, 1982). Moreover the sensitives of the Church with their 'prophetic utterance', preceding several RSPK events, could have led to the establishment of growing expectancy set which triggered some of the paranormal outbreaks.

The Guarulhos case is certainly one of the richest poltergeist cases in recent parapsychological history. Whether the phenomena reported are culturally, psychologically or paranormally based (or some combination of the above), however, is not clear. Perhaps what is most clear is that a complex case like this is open to different interpretations. Indeed, the case could serve as a projective test: one could read into it whatever one wishes, the result reflecting more perhaps about that person's own beliefs, predispositions, and biases, than about the facts themselves. We still have much to learn from cross-cultural studies not only about the peculiarities of psi manifestations but also about the limits of our own understanding.

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