Samba in the Night

Spiritism in Brazil

David J. Hess

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TO DANA

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PREFACE

I have set up *Samba in the Night* so that, like a prism, it can be viewed from different perspectives or read on different levels depending on one's interests and familiarity with the topic. Perhaps the most obvious "way in" is to see the book as a cultural anthropologist's interpretation of one type of religion in urban Brazil during the 1980s. Anthropologists call descriptive and interpretive accounts "ethnography," which means literally "writing about a people." I present my ethnography in the form of a personal journey through the complex world of spirit mediums (channelers), poltergeists, "psychic surgery," sorcery, legal battles, scientific debates, and other aspects associated with spirits and Spiritism in Brazil. At the same time, I show what it is like to do anthropological fieldwork, to come to terms with life in another culture, and to develop a framework for studying religion and ideology in complex societies.

My framework for studying religion in complex societies assumes that religions should not be studied in isolation, but instead as part of an ongoing dialogue with other religions, the state, the medical profession, scientists, and so on. I call this complex web of relationships the "ideological arena." I

also assume that social science is not an "objective" standpoint from which we simply describe and explain social phenomena, and therefore I locate myself and my colleagues as players in the same ideological arena. The assumption that social scientists are players, not observers, is now standard in what has sometimes been called the "new ethnography" movement in anthropology (e.g., Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986; cf. Mascia-Lees et al. 1989). As with other new ethnographers, I reject the pretension of value-free social science, and instead I examine critically the politics of Brazilian society and religion, as well as my own position as an anthropologist who studies those topics.

In the process of doing fieldwork and writing about religion and the "ideological arena" in Brazil, I also became involved in other issues that provide other angles for reading the book. One issue is my gradual discovery of Brazil as a culture and, likewise, the discovery of myself as a cultural being. Much of what I had thought was my own unique, individual personality I came to see as a product of my culture, and as a result I became fascinated with the question of differences between Brazil and the United States. At another level, I encountered the deeper questions of ultimate meaning that Brazilians and Americans share with many other people. My experiences led me to think more about questions such as "Is there life after death?" or—to put it in somewhat more Brazilian terms—"Is there samba in the long night of eternity?" For me, the question arose not as a purely philosophical issue but instead as a result of loss and my own experience of grief. In many ways *Samba* is closely linked in my mind to death, and the loss and grief associated with it.

This book is organized chronologically into three sections that correspond to my three stays in Brazil during the 1980s—1983, 1984 to 1986, and 1988. From this viewpoint, I follow the form of another, more extensive fieldwork account, *In Sorcery's Shadow*, by Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes. The titles of the three sections of *Samba* reflect the changing levels of my fieldwork as well as my changing interests. On the first trip, "Places," I was struggling just to get oriented, to understand

what people were saying, and to figure out how things worked. On the second, more extended trip (September 1984 to March 1986), language was less a problem, especially after the first six months. I call this section "Rituals and Ideologies" because I was doing my dissertation research, and I was concerned with questions of meaning and structure. By the middle of 1985, I was using a tape recorder more often and doing more formal interviews, and on the third trip (1988) I was using a tape recorder for almost all interviews. At that point I had come to see friends as much as to do research. My relationships were deeper, my Portuguese was fluent, my access to people was easier, and I was able to do a better job of getting out of the way of Brazilians and letting them speak for themselves.

Because *Samba* is an ethnography told in the form of a personal narrative, I have had to negotiate between two voices that commingle in the text. The "eye" wants to describe a religious movement and explain its complexities, whereas the "I" wants to tell a story about a journey of the self. As a writer I therefore confronted a number of choices. I had to balance my first-person memories against the problem of upstaging the voices of Brazilians, or at least I had to select my first-person experiences in ways that shed light on Brazil and fieldwork, not on me. I had to weigh the demands of confidentiality and discretion against those of ethnographic detail. I had to balance the use of scrupulously recorded dialogue with the realization that some of the most interesting dialogues were not tape-recorded or even written down soon after they took place. Finally, I had to select episodes that developed the narrative but also provided some information on the general question of religion in the ideological arena.

Although all these considerations lie behind the way I have written *Samba in the Night*, I still feel as though I am writing in the shadow of Claude Lévi-Strauss's masterpiece *Tristes Tropiques*. It is like dancing a samba in the shadows of a symphonic hall.

I owe thanks to many people for their help. My three trips

to Brazil were made possible by a number of grants. In 1983 the Latin American Studies Program (funded by the Scott Paper Foundation) and the Center for International Studies of Cornell University provided funding for my first trip to Brazil. The longer stay from 1984 to 1986 was supported by grants from the U. S. Department of Education (Fulbright-Hayes) and the Social Science Research Council, and the trip during 1988 was made possible by a grant from Colgate University.

My committee chair, James Boon, introduced me to a number of theoretical frameworks in anthropology, and I will always sense that my career as an anthropologist and interdisciplinarian got off to a good start largely due to his guidance. Committee member David Holmberg taught me a great deal about thinking systemically and anthropologically about religion. Likewise, committee member Thomas Holloway introduced me to the huge literature of Brazilian studies, including crucial theoretical issues in political economy and social history. Roberto DaMatta served as my field advisor, and he imparted to me his invaluable comparative framework for interpreting Brazilian society.

I would also like to thank the reviewers for this book. Both were very helpful, but I know the name of only one: the anthropologist Leni Silverstein, whose work (1993) and comments have inspired me to think through and write up my thoughts on race and gender as they relate to Spiritism. The comments of both readers, the editor Gioia Stevens, and my students have helped me in rewriting the book to make it more accessible. That includes adding a glossary with a key to word pronunciation. I have used the word *samba* in the title and the text because this term is relatively familiar to Anglophone readers. However, as a Brazilian colleague pointed out to me, in some cases a more accurate word would be *batuque*, especially for music associated with sacred African-Brazilian settings. Although the rhythm is similar, samba is generally associated with nonsacred settings.

Portions of the third section of *Samba* are taken from my article "Ghosts and Domestic Politics in Brazil," which

appeared in *Ethos: The Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 18, no. 4 (1990): 407–38. Those portions are reprinted with permission. I also cite some of my other publications for readers who wish to follow up on a topic in more detail and at a more scholarly level. The bibliography includes some recent work of relevance to the topic (see also Hess 1993, MS.). I hope the reader will interpret my self-citations as helpful pathways into the literature rather than as acts of immodesty.

In Brazil, Hercílio Costa and his family were very helpful in getting me immersed in the varieties of mediumistic experience in Niterói. Doctor Hernani Guimarães Andrade graciously read the manuscript, corrected several errors, and gave me permission to quote from his articles. My friend and colleague Neila Soares helped me with the transcription of some of the passages in the interviews with the poltergeist families. As for the many other people whom I should thank, my acknowledgments to them are in the pages that follow.

Troy, New York

SAMBA IN THE NIGHT

1983:

PLACES

CAMPINAS

June 11, 1983: Campinas, São Paulo

I am sitting in a large hall in a Spiritist center attending what is called a "meeting" or "session." Several rows up from me and to the right, a woman has begun to yell out and writhe in her chair. Three mediums have left the front of the large room and are hurriedly walking toward her. She is getting up out of her seat and beginning to move away from the mediums. She continues to shriek.

The mediums who have come to assist the woman are all men. As I later learn, mediums and clients alike can be either men or women. In general, Spiritist mediums tend to be "white" and middle-class, whereas their clients are often more ethnically diverse and poorer. This trio of mediums is more representative of Brazil's ethnic diversity: one has European features, another appears to be of mostly African descent, and the third is a mixture that suggests a partly Native American

heritage. I can already see that race, class, and gender will be important parts of the backdrop for Spiritist sessions.

The mediums have been up at the front of the auditorium giving *passes* to the clients who have been waiting patiently in the rows of chairs that face the front of the room. *Passes* are a kind of spiritual energy transfer similar to what is called the laying on of hands in English (see glossary). As in most Spiritist centers, the mediums proceed in an orderly way by selecting clients (or "frequenters") from the rows of seats. The clients leave their chairs, go to the front of the room, and sit at a table where the mediums wave their hands over the clients and transfer the healing energy to them. The case that I am describing is somewhat unusual, because a spirit attacked the woman out of the blue while she was still sitting in the rows of chairs.

The mediums have reached the woman and are giving her vigorous passes. At first she resists their efforts. To be concise, the woman herself is not resisting; according to the Spiritists, a spirit is making her resist. In Spiritist terms the woman is "obsessed": a spirit has attached itself to her and is making her act in undesirable and uncontrollable ways. The condition is not quite as severe as full-scale possession, because the person retains some degree of consciousness and memory. By giving the woman passes, the mediums see themselves as donating energy to her spiritual body and helping her to drive away the unwanted spirit.

Spiritists believe that "obsessing" spirits are fairly commonplace. In the proper sequence of events, we die and go on to a higher spiritual plane. We stay on the higher spiritual plane for an indefinite time as "disincarnate spirits" before we are reincarnated as humans. As we pass through successive incarnations, we achieve greater purity until eventually it is no longer necessary to be reincarnated any more and we are able to continue our work as "pure" spirits or spirit guides.

However, not all spirits follow the standard pattern. For various reasons, after death some spirits stick around on the terrestrial plane. They are not necessarily evil; it is better to think of them as, literally, lost souls. These errant or lost spir-

its can be very dangerous, especially when they attach themselves to people. For example, alcohol-craving spirits may hang around bars and attach themselves to drinkers and turn them into alcoholics, or demented spirits may follow people home who are foolish enough to walk through graveyards at night. Spirits can attach themselves to men or women and to people of all walks of life, and it is possible for more than one spirit to obsess a person. The "incarnate"—that is, people who are still living—generally do not know that they have been caught by a spirit, unless they go to a medium who can diagnose the ailment. However, if one is having bad luck, illness (particularly an illness that the doctor cannot cure), or odd thought obsessions and unusual behavioral compulsions, then it is possible that an obsessing spirit is the cause of the problems.

The obsessing spirit appears to have stopped bothering the woman. The three mediums have stopped giving their passes, and she is telling them that she is fine. The mediums return to the front of the room, where they continue to give passes in an orderly way. Later in the session, the mediums sit at the table at the front of the room, and the "mediums of incorporation" receive earthbound spirits. In turn, the "mediums of clarification" talk to the earthbound spirits, who have entered into the bodies of the mediums of incorporation. The clarification mediums convince the earthbound spirits to leave the terrestrial plane where they are bothering people. Spirit guides, or "spirits of light," are waiting to assist the perturbing spirits to the spirit world, where they can get help.

The mediums are dressed in medical-style, blue smock coats, and there is an almost clinical atmosphere to the session. Nevertheless, the mediums frequently appeal to Jesus Christ as they talk with the obsessing spirits. Their rhetoric reminds me of an evangelical church in the United States, something akin to late-night televangelist preachers. I was not expecting to hear such evangelical rhetoric in the Spiritist center; it is very different from the more Unitarian and ecumenical style of Spiritualist churches that I had attended in the United States. However, although the rhetoric of the

Spiritist center sounds like that of an American evangelical church, the building does not have any of the paraphernalia of a conventional Protestant church: there is no pulpit, cross, or stained-glass windows. Instead, the sparse furnishings are more reminiscent of the Puritan churches of New England or a college lecture hall. Many Spiritists will say that Spiritism is not a religion at all, but a philosophy. Likewise, they often speak of "study" rather than "faith." Yet, the Spiritists seemed perfectly comfortable with the two systems of discourse: one like evangelical Protestantism and the other like a college philosophy class.

To the left of the table is a piano, over which is a portrait of Allan Kardec, the founder of Spiritism. In Brazil, people have many names for Spiritism, including Kardecism (*kardecismo*), Spiritism of the table (*espiritismo da mesa*), or white table (*mesa branca*)—from the table-cloths on the tables at the front of the room. Spiritists, however, usually refer to their movement simply as "Spiritism" (*espiritismo*). They trace their roots to 1848, when the spirit of a murdered peddler haunted a house located outside Rochester, New York. The two girls who lived in the house claimed to establish communication with the spirit, and the Fox sisters' communications with the spirit world soon attracted widespread attention and emulation. Upstate New York was known as the burned-over district for its waves of religious revivalism—including Mormons, Shakers, and the Oneida community. (It was the California—or better, the Brazil—of the nineteenth century.) The Fox sisters' feats, together with the tradition of traveling hypnotists known as Mesmerists, helped spark the Spiritualist movement in the United States.

In Europe a similar movement emerged at roughly the same time, and in France a school teacher named Hippolyte Léon Dénizard Rivail began to work with spirit mediums and to ask the spirits philosophical questions. He later adopted the pen name Allan Kardec and "codified" the spirits' teachings in a series of textbooks that became the doctrinal basis of the Spiritist movement. Kardec's Spiritist doctrine was more intellectual and philosophical than Anglo-Saxon Spiri-

tualism, and his spirits also taught reincarnation and a karmic principle known as the "law of cause and effect" (or, as we say in English, "what comes around goes around"). In the 1860s the Spiritist movement attracted thousands of adherents in France, and by the end of the century it had attracted thousands more in Latin America. Today there are few Spiritists in Kardec's native country, but in Brazil Spiritism continues to be a vital movement with millions of followers. I had come to Brazil to study Spiritism, and this was my first Spiritist session.

VIRACOPUS

I learned about the session from Dana, a linguist who was living in Campinas, and as a result of her tip I had the privilege of beginning fieldwork on my first or second day in Brazil. Dana was the teacher of my first two courses in Portuguese back at Cornell, and in the summer of 1983 she was working on her dissertation and living in Campinas. She was kind enough to meet me at the Viracopus Airport when I first arrived. Although she appears only at the beginning and end of my story, my first images of Brazil are closely linked to her, and it is to her that I dedicate this book.

Dana kindly offered to let me stay with her for a few days while I got my "*feijoada* legs," an expression she had coined to replace "sea legs." The word *feijoada* refers to the pork-and-black-bean stew that is associated with slaves and recognized as the national dish of Brazil. She did not waste any time helping me learn the ropes. My very first memory of a significant cultural difference is a snack we had while we were still at Viracopus. The airport was a very modern and impressive structure, and like much of Brazil it created the misleading first impression that the country was really not very different from the United States. Yet, while we were still in the airport, she insisted that I begin my trip with a *vitamina*, a Brazilian milkshake. She ordered—to my horror and probably to impress me—an avocado milkshake. The avocado, as Dana informed me, is a fruit in Brazil, not a vegetable. I later learned that the

idea of guacamole distressed my Brazilian friends as much as that of an avocado milkshake did my American friends. The milkshake had a puke-green color that was wholly unappealing, but I drank it anyway. It was not nearly as bad as it looked, and eventually I even developed a taste for the green milkshakes.

I remember the trip from Viracopus with a certain clarity that subsequent events have not erased. It is probably true that the first time one sets foot in a foreign country is the time one sees it most vividly. As we rode the bus back to Campinas from the airport, I was impressed by the clear blueness of the tropical skies, the lush greenness of the farmlands, and the sweet harshness of the exhaust of the cars, many of which were powered by alcohol.

"I was all prepared for *Pixote* (pee-'show-chee)," I said, referring to a Brazilian movie about urban street crime. "This is all so beautiful." I felt relaxed rather than on guard.

"It hasn't been," she said. "It's the first sunny day I've seen in a long time. You brought the sun with you."

I smiled and watched the scenery. Movies such as *Pixote* and *Bye-Bye Brazil* had formed my image of Brazil—a land of filthy, crime-ridden cities and dusty, backward countrysides—but instead I encountered a modern and rich country. Dana assured me that I had landed in the most developed part of the most developed state in the country and that in many ways the rich cities of the interior of São Paulo State could hardly be considered part of the Third World at all. Campinas was the high-tech center of São Paulo, the state that native boosters referred to as the "locomotive" that dragged the rest of Brazil with it on a path toward that always elusive status of being a "developed country." In the interior of the state of São Paulo in the early 1980s, the roads were (reasonably) good, the buses ran (more or less) on time, and the economy was (relatively) healthy. Only a farmer riding in an oxcart, which we passed on the highway, reminded me that I was in the Third World.

The activities of everyday life in the subsequent days were more disorienting than my arrival. Dana gave me lessons on

how to survive everyday transactions. I learned how to buy things, a complete mystery and an extraordinarily confusing task. I learned to tip the custodian in the bathroom but not to tip in restaurants. At the bakery, I learned to pay first at a cashier and then to hand the *ficha*, the little receipt, to the clerks, who otherwise ignored me. I learned quickly to be pushy, very pushy, and never to show my money until the bill was added up, because doing so would inflate the bill and perhaps attract thieves. I learned that it was supremely important to dress well and to take lots of showers, since clothing and cleanliness mark social class in Brazil the way automobiles and houses do in the United States. I learned to speak as briefly as possible, so as not to give away my lack of fluency in the language, betray myself as a foreigner, and inflate the bill. In my notebook, I wrote some comments about culture as something that is learned and then later forgotten as it submerges into the subconscious world of daily habits. "But these habits also carry implications," I wrote, "or they *suggest* values." It took me a long time to realize how deeply these differences in values ran.

I kept a notebook during this first trip, but it is mainly a notebook of names and addresses, of research leads, and of some very abstract ruminations about the relationships of rock-and-roll to the Protestant work ethic, samba to popular Catholicism, and Brazilian to "North American" culture. (Brazilians prefer to call Americans "North Americans." As they say, "We are all Americans.") I had seen the trip as an exercise in "getting my feet wet," and as a result I did not take detailed notes on everything that I now write about. In retrospect, I wish I had taken more copious notes during my 1983 trip, especially on many of the informal conversations that I had.

Dana was confronting methodological issues of her own as she struggled to complete her dissertation research, which involved some rather intricate issues of Chomskian linguistics. She was also struggling with what we graduate students sometimes jokingly called "dissertation neurosis." I have seen so many friends afflicted by the condition that I am con-

vinced that a new category of psychiatric diagnosis should be created. For most people, the writer's block is coupled with an obsession to think about writing all the time. Dana explained that she had chosen a problem and learned that apparently even Chomsky had looked at it and not been able to solve it, so he had left it as a "mop-up" operation that a graduate student might work on someday. She confessed to me that she was worried she would not be able to mop it up. I wanted to be able to help her, but the issues of transformational grammar were too technical for me to understand. After talking to her about her plight, I told her I was glad that I was just an anthropologist. Linguistics was like mathematics; either you had it or you did not. In contrast, anthropologists just have to learn the language, develop informants, observe and listen, and write an ethnography. "Anthropology is so much less problematic," I told her with just a suggestion of a smile.

Dana and I sometimes had long talks in the evenings, when we took her cat, a stray she was convinced was neurotic due to mistreatment, out to play in the lot behind the apartment building where she lived. She told me how she was deeply interested in Spiritism, and she wanted me to tell her everything I knew about it. At first I thought she was genuinely curious, but I noticed that her attention flagged rapidly whenever I talked about the subject. Behind this apparent interest was a confession waiting to be told.

"I'm interested in Spiritism because one day I think I'll be one," she told me one night.

I laughed. "I suppose I am, too. I guess we'll all be spirits someday, if we're anything at all."

"But I mean I think I'll be one real soon."

"What are you saying, Dana?"

"I've never told anyone else this before. I don't know why I'm telling you." She told me many secrets that summer, and she always prefaced them with this remark. "But I think if I'll finish my dissertation, I'll die."

"That's ridiculous."

"It's true."

"You shouldn't say things like that. It's bad luck."

"But it's true."

"You shouldn't think like that. If you think you're going to die, you'll die, because your unconscious will listen to you. You shouldn't say things like that."

But Dana was obstinate. It was one of her darker moments, a private moment that was so different from the Dana I knew that I half suspected she was pulling my leg. She had been in Brazil for a long time, and anyone who had lived in Brazil a long time has learned to delight in what they call *sacanagem*. It is not necessary to go into the untranslatable word in any detail here, but in this context to *sacanear* someone is to pull their leg. I wondered if she was *sacaneando* me, but her mood was dramatically different from the jovial figure I knew, the Dana who was forever making bilingual puns, the bright and witty public persona. In public Dana was good at busting and razzing; she always had a stock of funny and somewhat raunchy jokes; and her personality combined with her Sigourney Weaver chin, long black curls, and winning smile to make her a most attractive—even charismatic—figure.

Dana had a beautiful smile, and it was never more beautiful than when I showed her the present I had brought for her: several packets of extrawide ribbon dental floss, one of the few household commodities that she had asked me to bring because they were not available in Brazil. At night she spent what seemed like an interminable time brushing and flossing her teeth. She told me she admired my long eyelashes and I told her I admired her teeth.

"Only a dentist could appreciate your teeth," I said to her one night. "Maybe you should fall in love with a dentist."

"Do you know any in Campinas?" she asked, laughing. Then, her mood shifted, and she said darkly although still playfully, as though to tease me: "Someday a coroner will look at these teeth and say, 'What a shame! Such beautiful teeth in such a young corpse!'"

"Dana! Don't say things like that!"

Most of the people I needed to see were in the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, so after a few days of adjustment I moved on. Dana graciously agreed to let Campinas serve as my base of operations, so I was able to leave some of my luggage with her and return a couple of times during the course of my 1983 trip.

My first stopping point was São Paulo, the largest city I had ever seen. This huge metropolis is usually compared to Chicago, but in my mind Los Angeles seems more apt. Sampa, as the natives call it with affection, is a sprawling maze of endless white, sun-baked highrises that try to poke their way through the blanket of grey smog. Culturally, the city's position in Brazil is less like that of Los Angeles and more like that of New York: Paulistas see themselves as the sophisticated financial, political, and cultural trend-setters of their country. Although Rio de Janeiro might also claim that position, the Paulistas see the Cariocas, the natives of Rio, as fun-and-sun beach bums whose antiwork ethic is partly responsible for the economic plight of the country: the Southern Californians of Brazil. I stayed in São Paulo with a friend of a friend named Flávio. At the time he was studying to enter the Rio Branco School, where he planned to begin training as a diplomat, and like almost every Brazilian I met, he was a most gracious host.

While in São Paulo, I visited Doctor Hernani Guimarães Andrade, one of the leaders of the Spiritist movement. Doctor Hernani was a Mineiro, a native of Minas Gerais, a state that, like Massachusetts, is known for its conservative religious tradition (Catholic, not Puritan), its revolutionary Republicanism of the eighteenth century (a failure, not a success), and its political statesmen (more often wily conservatives than high-minded liberals). A dignified man in his seventies, he wore suspenders and sported a pencil-thin mustache that reminded me of the stars in old black-and-white movies. He had come to São Paulo in the 1920s, a time when, as he described it to me, the city had a European flavor that resulted in part from the hordes of Italian and German immigrants who had come earlier to work on the coffee planta-

tions. Doctor Hernani assured me that in the 1920s São Paulo was another city, not yet choked by pollution, crippled by crime, or swollen by migration from the northeast. To me, however, São Paulo represented less the ghost of a better past than a harbinger of a *Blade-Runner* future. Struggling as it was under the effects of industrial pollution, rapid population growth, staggering unemployment, and skyrocketing urban violence, São Paulo was the everycity of the future, including those back home. It seems that every few months now I read about a new level of urban crime in the United States, and I experience a sense of déjà vu because I have already heard about it in Brazil.

Doctor Hernani is not, in fact, a Ph.D. or an M.D.; in Brazil the term *doctor* is sometimes granted as an honorific title for people of great respect, a position that he holds within the Spiritism movement. For most of his life Doctor Hernani had worked as an engineer, and since his retirement he continued a heavy schedule in his Brazilian Institute of Psychobiophysical Research. From his institute, he maintained correspondence with psychical researchers throughout the world and with Spiritists throughout Brazil. As I was to learn when I visited him, the institute was in fact a group of small offices that he shared with his secretary, Suzuko Hashizume. Suzuko was one of the many Japanese Brazilians descended from the immigrants who came to São Paulo at the turn of the century to work on the coffee plantations, and her fellow Japanese Brazilians are said to form the largest Japanese population outside Japan.

As a writer, Hernani was a complex figure. He wrote under various pseudonyms for the *Folha Espírita*, a Spiritist newspaper published in São Paulo that emphasized what is sometimes called the scientific line of Spiritism. As a Spiritist intellectual, he encouraged his fellow Spiritists to pay more attention to all the teachings of Allan Kardec. Although all Spiritists accepted the fundamental principles of Kardec's philosophy—communication with the dead via mediums, the existence of a spiritual body, healing through spiritual energies, and the gradual purification of the soul across various incar-

nations in a process governed by the law of karma—there were huge divergences among Spiritists regarding anything other than the basics of the doctrine.

Kardec had taught that Spiritism was a combination of empirical research, philosophical reflection, and right action governed by the law of karma and the Christian golden rule: in a sense he had synthesized science and religion, not to mention East and West. However, in contemporary Brazil, the Spiritists with college educations—the doctors, lawyers, and engineers in the movement—tended to be more interested in the "scientific side" of Spiritism. As a result, they generally paid more attention to Kardec's first two books, the philosophical *Book of the Spirits* and the expository *Book of the Mediums*. In addition, the intellectuals were very interested in the legacy of psychical research that developed in France and Britain at the turn of the century. Psychical research was an earlier form of parapsychology in which researchers attempted to study from a scientific perspective the phenomena associated with mediums, ghosts, telepathy, and so on.

In contrast, the nonintellectuals—the vast majority of the Spiritist movement—tended to be more interested in the day-to-day charitable activities of the Spiritist centers, which included providing food and medical services for the poor, running orphanages and mental hospitals, and holding sessions of passes and "disobsession" for the earthbound spirits and the people afflicted by them. These Spiritists generally had a more evangelical outlook, and they tended to take more note of Kardec's *Gospel According to Spiritism*. They also liked the evangelical books by Emmanuel, a spirit who dictated through the famous Brazilian medium Francisco Cândido Xavier, better known as "Chico Xavier."

There seemed to be some disagreement among Spiritists about whether or not their doctrine could be considered Christian. Certainly Kardec himself did not accept many of the key Christian dogmas. For example, he rejected the beliefs in heaven and hell (like some Buddhists, he believed they were psychological states created by the mind), the trinity (Jesus was just the spiritual leader of this planet), and angels and

demons (only more or less developed spirits). But many Spiritists considered themselves to be Christians, and Kardec's doctrine was Christian in the sense that he saw the moral basis of his philosophy in Jesus's teachings, especially the Golden Rule. One Spiritist intellectual resolved the complex issue by claiming that one could be a Spiritist and a Christian, but one could also be a Spiritist and a Buddhist, or a Spiritist and a Moslem. Kardec saw Spiritism as the scientific, philosophical, and moral basis of all religions.

Unlike many Spiritists whom I met later, Doctor Hernani did not give me long evangelical lectures on Spiritist doctrine. He spoke to me as one researcher to another, and he kindly gave me a tour of his institute, including a survey of the many filing cabinets containing newspaper clippings and reports of cases he had researched. Doctor Hernani considered himself a psychical researcher, and he had published several detailed case studies of poltergeists and of people who claimed to have remembered past lives (reincarnation). However, his approach was far from the mainstream of the parapsychologists of North America and Western Europe. Most of the latter were busy designing controlled experiments of extrasensory perception and psychokinesis (mind over matter). They hoped their experiments would prove replicable and therefore earn scientific respectability for the field. In contrast, Hernani was more interested in the older tradition of psychical research, which was concerned with developing case histories of psychic phenomena that suggested the soul might survive death.

Hernani was acutely aware that his paradigm of research had all but died out in the northern hemisphere, and he corresponded with those few parapsychologists who still held true to the old psychical research tradition that investigated mediums, ghosts, and the like. Of the research in the northern hemisphere, he was very interested in the psychiatrist Ian Stevenson's case histories of children who remember past lives. He was perhaps even more interested in what was known as "transcommunication instruments," an attempt by some psychical researchers to communicate directly with spirits via tape recorders and other electronic devices. The claim

was that one could call the spirits, leave the tape recorder on, come back to the empty room later, and play back "electronic voices" from the spirits. Most northern hemisphere parapsychologists—who themselves are on the fringes of the scientific community—had dismissed as unscientific the reports of electronic voice phenomena, but Hernani believed instead that those reports provided evidence for communication from the dead. He found it especially significant that one of the spirit communicators had been a professor at my university. (When I got home, I looked up the name in Cornell's card catalog, and indeed the man had been a professor there.)

Although Doctor Hernani and I did not discuss the implications of a transcommunication instrument for the Spiritist movement, it dawned on me later that the new machine could make the entire institution of mediumship—upon which the movement was based—technologically obsolete. From the point of view of the intellectuals, many of the communications with spirits were distorted by "noise" or interference from the unconscious of the medium—a problem they called "animism." They believed that although mediums sometimes thought they were contacting spirits they were instead doing little more than projecting unconscious materials. To use a machine would mean that spirit communication would obtain an entirely new dimension: it would be freed from human frailty. Politically, I thought, the development might also shift spirit communication to the hands of the intellectuals, who would to some extent control this high-tech mediumship.

Hernani also discussed with me his theories of poltergeists, that is, disruptive spirits that throw objects around, make loud banging sounds, and sometimes start fires. Psychologists and psychiatrists have naturalistic explanations for such reports: fraud, active imaginations, rats or squirrels, faulty wiring, and/or dissociated (trancelike behavior) of the living. Most northern hemisphere parapsychologists believe that when these "naturalistic" explanations are eliminated, there are some cases that can only be explained as the result of the unconscious psychokinesis of one of the family members. In contrast, Hernani told me how the two cases that he had

investigated in the suburban cities of Suzano and Guarulhos both seemed to involve an element of "black magic," and he believed that the poltergeists were most likely evil spirits sent by local sorcerers, members of Quimbanda cults.

Doctor Hernani was careful to use the proper term *Quimbanda* for "black magic," but I often heard Spiritists use the word *Macumba* as a disparaging term for any spirit mediumship religion with some African influence. As I came to learn, Spiritists often used the words *Quimbanda* and *Macumba* in a pejorative way similar to the way *voodoo* is often used in English. Likewise, Catholics and Protestants often used the word *Spiritism* as a disparaging term that denied the carefully constructed differences between Spiritists and other religions that had spirit mediums. Spiritists were highly offended by this misuse of the term *Spiritists*. As I was to learn, most Spiritist intellectuals drew a sharp distinction between their own movement and philosophy and those of Umbanda and Candomblé. Doctor Hernani was no exception, but at least he recognized differences between Umbanda, Quimbanda, and Candomblé.

Social scientists and Spiritist intellectuals such as Doctor Hernani tend to use a different vocabulary that is less offensive to Spiritists and other practitioners of spirit mediumship in Brazil. Any religion that has spirit mediums—that is, people who are believed to communicate with spirits—is called a "spirit mediumship religion," which is a translation of the Portuguese phrase *religião mediúnica*. Within that field, there are three substantial subdivisions in southeastern and southern Brazil. First, Spiritists (or Kardecists) tend to be middle-class and of European descent, and their spirit guides are often European intellectuals, Asian sages, or famous Brazilians. In a word, Spiritism is the "upscale" or middle-class option among the various types of spirit mediumship religions practiced in Brazil.

A second religion that also has spirit mediums is Umbanda, which tends to be more mixed in terms of class and race. Umbanda emerged in urban Brazil during the early twentieth century, and it was part of the general "modernist" movements of that time, which were rejecting European artistic, political,

and intellectual traditions. According to some versions of the history, the first Umbanda mediums were disaffected Spiritists who wanted to open up their centers to spirits of a more Brazilian nature (see Brown 1985, 1986). Umbanda mediums are known for receiving spirits of Brazilian Indians—Native Americans known as *caboclos*—and of former African slaves called *pretos velhos*, or literally "old blacks."

The African religions form the third main group of religions with spirit mediums. There are many types of African religions, but for the sake of simplicity I will mention only the most well-known, Candomblé Nagô. *Nagô* is a generic term for the Yoruba people of what was formerly a huge West African empire and is now one of the major ethnic groups of contemporary Nigeria. In Brazil, the Yoruba slaves and their descendants have had a tremendous influence on the development of the African religions, and they have also had an important influence in the Caribbean, where the Yoruba-derived religion is called "Santería." Candomblé can be distinguished from Umbanda and Spiritism by its members, who are more likely to be of African descent than the people who attend the sessions of Spiritism and Umbanda. Candomblé can also be distinguished by the spirits that its priests and priestesses receive, which are known as the *orixás*, or the ancestor spirits of the Yoruba. The *orixás* are usually associated with natural phenomena—thunder, the seas, fresh water, and so on—and many are also believed to have been kings or queens in ancient times.

To summarize, as a first approximation the spirit mediumship religions in southeastern and southern Brazil may be thought of as divided into three main groups: Spiritism, Umbanda, and Candomblé (as an example of the African religions). Schematically, one might think of the differences among the three religions in terms of the type of spirit they receive, the social class and ethnic identification of the people who belong to the groups, the places in Brazil where the religions have the highest concentration, the religion's place of origin, and the type of music utilized (see Table 1). The overview is only a first approximation, but it may be helpful in getting oriented.

There are many exceptions and complications. For example, some Umbanda groups are very white and middle-class, whereas others are more lower-class and have more people of mixed races. Some Umbanda centers have Quimbanda sessions, in which they receive the trickster spirit known as "Exu," which is actually a Yoruba *orixá*. Quimbanda mediums sometimes practice sorcery and countersorcery rituals, which give them their negative reputation. In general Umbanda centers recognize the nature/ancestor spirits of the Yoruba, although rarely do the mediums incorporate or receive into their bodies the *orixás*. Likewise, today the religions are actually fairly widespread throughout Brazil, and each of the three attracts people of all classes and ethnic backgrounds. Still, Candomblé is usually associated with Bahia, Umbanda is said to have originated in Rio, and Spiritism is strongest in São Paulo. The regions of Brazil correspond somewhat with ethnic composition. Thus, from São Paulo to the south there are larger numbers of people of European descent, and Bahia has a very high percentage of people of African descent. Rio, like Umbanda, is geographically and socially somewhere in between.

TABLE 1

A Schematic View of Some Key Differences Among Spiritism, Umbanda, and Candomblé

	Spiritism	Umbanda	Candomblé
Type of spirit	Western intellectuals, Asian sages, etc.	Native Americans (*caboclos*) African Slaves (*pretos velhos*)	Yoruba Orixás
Social base	White, middle class to working class	Greater mixture of race and class	Historically black and poor
Regional strength	São Paulo to the south	Rio to the south	Bahia (northeast)
Place of origin	France	Brazil	West Africa
Music	No singing or dancing; tapes of European classical instrumental/choral	Clapping, singing, and dancing; Brazilian/West African	Drumming, singing, and dancing; West African

RIO AND NITERÓI

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From São Paulo I moved on to Rio de Janeiro or, more accurately, Niterói, the city across the bay from Rio. Cariocas tend to think their city is the beginning and end of the world, and many have nothing but scorn for Niterói. For example, when one white male Carioca anthropologist heard where I was staying, he said, "Niterói! That's like living in Brooklyn. No, that's too nice. It's like living in Oakland." Almost every traveler to Brazil describes Rio de Janeiro, Guanabara Bay, Sugar Loaf Mountain and its cable car, the beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, and the statue of Christ the Redeemer at the top of Corcovado Mountain. The clichés have become so commonplace that the singer Caetano Veloso has even catalogued them in a witty song. I am tempted to leave my contribution to the Guanabara lore with the comparison that my colleague made between Niterói and Oakland. As the Cariocas says, the best part of Niterói is the view of Rio. The natives of Niterói would probably retort that they have the best of both worlds—they have a marvelous view of Rio that never wears out, yet they do not have to put up with the everyday crime and filth of Rio.

I suppose descriptions of Rio and Guanabara Bay are not only clichéd but also outdated, because these days few people arrive in Rio by steamship. By the time I reached Rio, I had left behind on the rolling hills outside Campinas and the busy streets of São Paulo whatever acuity of perception that I might have gained from first impressions. It is true that I tried to describe Rio in the postcards that I sent home, but I could not come up with a good point of comparison: Ithaca and Lake Cayuga overrun by ten million people? Rio was an urban chameleon: it had European street signs and outdoor cafés like Paris, a harbor and downtown like New York, beaches like Miami or Los Angeles, hillside neighborhoods and trollies like San Francisco, and winding streets in Upper Tijuca that made me think of Liberty Boulevard in Cleveland, with its statues, gracious trees, and stopping points that had become decrepit, overgrown, and crime-infested. I loved Rio and I have many fond memories of life in that city, but I think to

appreciate it fully, one must experience it at some distance, such as from Corcovado's heights or Niterói's beaches—which, by the way, are far better than those of Rio.

I liked Niterói, and in any case, it was where my friends, Bill and Monique, were living. Bill was a graduate student in anthropology who had already been doing fieldwork in the Amazon, and Monique was studying as a medical student and already doing hospital work. Through her I got my first taste of Brazilian medicine, since I met her once or twice when she finished work at the Hospital Antônio Pedro. Although it was a university hospital and one of the best in the area, I was not prepared for the poverty I saw. The hospital itself, although clean, was poorly lit and, to eyes that were accustomed to first-world luxuries, seemed poorly equipped. But what was most striking to me was the poverty of the people who sat in the emergency room waiting either for relatives or for medical attention. I saw people with diseases I had only heard about in books before: people with elephantiasis, the disease that makes the legs and ankles swell up like the feet of an elephant; people coughing from tuberculosis; and patients with deep, gaping open wounds filled with pus, or arms and legs marked by splotchy skin infections that looked like leprosy. I later learned that beggars sometimes take off their bandages and expose their sores on the streets because they can earn more money by doing so.

In one respect, however, Brazil in the 1980s was far advanced over the United States: it had socialized medicine, and, in theory at least, medical care was the right of every citizen. In practice, the rich tended to go to private doctors and clinics. Furthermore, healing was not restricted to the official medical system, and a lively and varied series of religious and alternative therapies flourished. In the first place, Spiritist centers often housed pharmacists, dentists, and physicians who provided free services and prescriptions as charity work for the poor. Their charitable medical services shaded into homeopathic prescriptions given by Spiritist mediums, spiritual passes (as I saw back in Campinas for the obsessed woman), and spirit or psychic surgery performed by mediums.

There are also various forms of countersorcery rituals and herbal remedies available from the practitioners of Umbanda and Candomblé. To use an American metaphor, Brazilians, especially of the lower classes but often of the middle classes as well, tended to cover their bases: they backed up medicine from doctors and pharmacists (both allopathic and homeopathic) with various home remedies as well as with the help of mediums.

I got my first opportunity to see an Umbandist healing session during a visit to the home of the anthropologist Roberto DaMatta, who also lived in Niterói. There I met Celeste, who prepared one of the many memorable dinners I have since enjoyed in their home. I also met Albino, a lawyer who lived in the neighborhood and worked in one of the poor cities in the greater Rio area. When he found out that I had come to Brazil to study Spiritism, he said, "I know of a good center in the city where I work. I do the legal work for them. You should visit it sometime."

We talked for a while about the center, and although it was clearly not Spiritism, I thought it would be interesting to see an Umbanda center. "I'd love to visit it," I told him. "When can I go?"

"Anytime you want," he said.

"Great. How about tomorrow?" I asked.

"That's the way, David," Roberto interrupted, making a characteristic comment that was half joke and half anthropological observation: "You have to nail down a Brazilian and make them make a commitment. Otherwise, it will never happen."

I realized then that I might have committed a social indiscretion; perhaps the invitation had not been serious. So I said, "Maybe we should leave it for another time."

However, Albino said, "No, I'm serious. Why don't you come to my house for lunch tomorrow?"

The next day I went to Albino's house, and his family treated me to a wonderful Brazilian lunch. (Unlike many anthropologists, who have been known to lose weight in the field, I always return from Brazil several pounds heavier.) During the

lunch I met Albino's daughter Ana Ester, who turned out to be a medical student with Monique. She showed me her record collection, and I was embarrassed to find—as I found on many other occasions with Brazilians—that she knew more about American popular music than I did. Albino, however, was detained at the office, so Roberto's son Renato gave me a ride to the Umbanda center.

NORTH ZONE, SOUTH ZONE

I had no idea what to expect from my first Umbanda session. As we drove up to the center, the car swerved to avoid potholes in the semipaved road, and I looked out at houses that were only one step above shanties. The center was located in a very poor neighborhood in a city that is contiguous with Rio's North Zone. Rio is divided geographically into the South Zone, the prestigious middle-class neighborhoods located near the beaches and the ocean, and the North Zone, a huge sprawl of cities and neighborhoods that are located in the predominantly poor, inland area that arches around Rio's side of the Guanabara Bay.

I did not know that the center was holding a double session that day, nor did I know how long each session would last. During the first session, the mediums received *pretos velhos*, the spirits of the slaves. I was surprised when I met my first *preto velho* spirits; they were familiar to me in an odd way. When the mediums incorporated the spirits, their backs became hunched over, signaling the old age of the spirits as well as their oppression from back-breaking work as slaves. The mediums then sat on little wooden stools and smoked pipes, often resting an elbow on a knee and having a very sage expression on their faces. One might call the *pretos velhos* "Brazilian Uncle Toms," except that in Brazil they were figures admired by all races. I had the same sense of recognition that a Brazilian friend of mine had when she was visiting me in the United States and found a picture of "Aunt Jemima" on the maple syrup bottle. She recognized the bandana on Aunt Jemima's head as something that the African-Brazilian

women of Bahia wear, and from that moment on we ate lots of pancakes and syrup made by "Tia Jemima."

The clients, who had been waiting patiently during the songs and dances that preceded the consultations, finally were able to go up to the mediums, and there they sat, one client with one medium, and asked for advice about issues of health, work, or personal relationships. When my turn came, I did not know what advice to seek, so I told the medium I was an American who wanted to learn more about Umbanda. The spirit of the African slave, speaking through the medium, then sent me to the father-of-the-saints (*pai-de-santo*), or head medium, who sat at the front of the room by an altar and took care of the more difficult cases. He then told me that my guardian spirit was Xangô, the *orixá* who in Brazil is syncretized with St. Jerome and is the guardian of thunder and justice. He told me some other things, but my Portuguese was so bad and his so colloquial that I did not understand him.

Later, hours later, the next session began. The mediums had taken a break for coffee and *salgadinhos*, or cheese and meat pastries, and it was already growing dark and very cold. Although Rio is a tropical city, the temperature on a rainy night in the winter can easily dip into the fifties. I began to wonder if Albino had forgotten about me and how I would get home. I really was not sure where I was. I knew the name of the town and that it was about an hour from Niterói. I knew there was a bus station somewhere in town, but since the neighborhood was very poor I did not think it was prudent to try to walk back to the bus station. The second session was to be a session dedicated to the *caboclos*, the Native American spirits. By receiving both the spirits of the African slaves in addition to those of Native Americans (Brazilian Indians), Umbanda mediums encode the racial diversity of Brazil through their rituals.

So I sat and waited, shivering among the clients who were waiting for the session of *caboclos*. The people I sat with were very poor and very friendly, their human warmth almost enhanced by the coldness and dampness of the air. The mediums danced what I subsequently learned were called *pontos*

cantados, songs dedicated to the spirits, and finally they began to receive the spirits. I watched as some of the clients went into the center of the room, and the mediums touched them and received the "perturbing" spirits that had been responsible for their ill fortune. A medium then motioned to me, and I shook my head. He came up to me and said, "It's your turn."

"It's not necessary," I said.

"Are you afraid?" he asked.

"No," I said. "It's just not necessary."

"If you're not afraid, you should come. The father-of-the-saints says he wants to do you."

Do me? I wondered. Perhaps I had misunderstood his Portuguese. I was a little worried about what they were going to do to me, but I did not want to pass up the opportunity. In graduate school there was a lot of talk about that elusive fieldwork method known as "participant-observation"; observation had been easy, but this was my first taste of "participation." I followed the medium onto the center of the floor, and there he told me I had to remove all metal and money, so I parted with my glasses, watch, shoes, coins, and wallet. The phrase "a fool and his money" came to mind, but then I figured they would not do anything to a guest of their lawyer. The medium and friend of Albino seemed to read my mind; he said, "Don't worry. The person taking care of your things can be counted on."

"*Tudo bem*," I said. "That's fine. What about my blue jeans? They have metal here and here," I said, pointing to the zipper and the rivets.

"No," he laughed. "It's not necessary. Unless you want to."

"No, that's fine."

"But you should roll up your pants legs and roll up your shirt sleeves."

I stood there shivering, my cold feet on the cement floor. The mediums then came up to me and rubbed rum over my neck, arms, and legs. I reeked of the sweet-smelling Brazilian *cachaça*. Then about seven mediums stood around me, each touching a different part of my body: my neck, arms, back, and legs. Suddenly one flew backwards in a frenzy, followed by

another and another, like popcorn popping. They each received an evil spirit attached to me. I think they said I had seven evil spirits, and I have to admit that I wondered a little if they were putting on a show for the gringo. There is an expression in Brazil: "for the English to see." As the anthropologist Peter Fry (1982:17) describes, the saying goes back at least to the time when the English bosses ran the São Paulo railroad and the Brazilians had to put on a good show for their colonial bosses. Of course, I could not rule out the other possibility: that I had already managed to pick up several evil spirits during my short stay in Brazil.

I stood still until the medium told me I could go, and then an assistant gave me back my material possessions. The session lasted for an hour or two longer, and I watched, waited, and shivered. I noticed on the wall a sign that said "Fridays at midnight: a session of Quimbanda." In 1988 I finally attended one of those sessions in another temple, and I learned that, at least in this other temple, the sessions were like the African slave spirits' consultation session with the difference that instead of receiving the *preto velho* spirits, the mediums received Exu spirits. Exu is the Yoruba trickster spirit that Portuguese colonists had equated with the Christian devil, but in fact Exus are just very streetwise spirits who generally give down-to-earth and sometimes ornery advice. In short, they are the very Brazilian rogues (*malandros*) of the spirit world (see DaMatta 1981, 1991; Birman 1985).

I felt fortunate that it was not a Friday, and when the *caboclo* spirit session finally ended, the medium gave me a ride to the bus stop, which turned out to be within walking distance from the center, so I realized I could have left at any time. I thanked him profusely for his patience and kindness, and I then bought my ticket back to Niterói. Finding that I still had ten minutes before the next bus departed, I walked across the street and went into the discount store, where I found a rack of sweatshirts, all of which had stamped on them the names of universities in the United States and Europe, frequently misspelled. I thought of an SDS radical from Madison whom I had befriended at a Christian leadership summer camp that

I had attended when I was in high school. My school had awarded me a scholarship to the camp, but the heavy dose of evangelical Christianity left me alienated, and I found myself happiest with another misfit: the radical student counselor, the Exu of the summer camp. Thinking of him, I bought a grey, University of Wisconsin sweatshirt and returned to the bus stop.

A few days later I had the opportunity to attend a different sort of ritual in Rio's South Zone. One of the people to whom Dana had introduced me was Márcio, an assistant professor in São Paulo who was also starting work on his Ph.D. in Rio. (In Brazil, it was possible to become an assistant professor after receiving the master's degree, and then later one finished the Ph.D., often while still carrying a full course load.) Márcio was one of Dana's best friends and was to become one of my best friends as well. A tall man who towered over me with his brilliant mind, unforgettable wit, and long, black, curly hair, Márcio also had a good dose of Brazilian cordiality or generosity. He welcomed me into his network of friends and adopted me into his family, and I learned from him some important lessons about the art of living a more Latin life. Among his acts of kindness, he introduced me to his many friends, some of whom included Spiritists and anthropologists. Those introductions facilitated my fieldwork enormously.

I think it was Márcio who alerted me to a book-signing party to be held in the fashionable South Zone neighborhood of Lower Leblon, what he called Rio's West Village. The local tribe of anthropologists was all gathered there to toast the publication of two new books, one by Alba Zaluar, *The Men of God*, and the other by Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro Cavalcanti, *The Invisible World: Cosmology, Ritual System, and Notion of Person in Spiritism*. I suppose book-signing parties are the academic's version of disobsession or exorcism rituals. Books take so long to write and edit that by the time they are published they feel like unwanted spirits that are obsessing our lives. This exorcism ritual was brief, and the "natives" served wine afterward.

My heart had sunk when I first heard about Maria Laura's new book. I thought my dissertation was going to be the first ethnography of Brazilian Spiritism. There had been some sociological and historical studies, but no one had yet accomplished a book-length, ethnographic study. Maria Laura Cavalcanti's book was based on her master's thesis, which she completed at the prestigious Department of Anthropology of the National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where master's theses often inflate into impressive, book-length projects that are subsequently published. Hers was a detailed study based on observations at a Spiritist center and at the Brazilian Institute of Spiritist Culture, the latter a locus of Spiritist intellectuals. I had been scooped.

Maria Laura kindly invited me to visit her at her house, where we talked about her work and my project. She encouraged me to continue with my project, and she told me that she did not plan to do her doctoral research on the same topic. She also encouraged me to explore in more detail the Spiritist intellectuals, whose work she had only touched on. Since I had already met with Doctor Hernani as well as some other Spiritist intellectuals in Rio, her suggestion seemed interesting as well as feasible. I also believed that there was room for more historical contextualization, which could build on the previous research of the American historian Donald Warren (1968, 1984) as well as Spiritist historians such as Zêus Wantuil (1969). Likewise, the field of textual studies, of reading and interpreting the huge literary output of the Spiritist mediums and intellectuals, was wide open. As a result, the broader contours of my dissertation project were already beginning to fall into place.

SÃO PAULO

When I returned to São Paulo at the end of my first trip, I paid a call on Cândido Procópio Ferreira de Camargo, a sociologist who taught at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC). I had not yet gotten the hang of the Brazilian academic scene—unlike in the United States, professors expect and

prefer to be called at home—and I missed him several times at his office before I finally arranged a visit with him. On another occasion with another professor, I was lucky enough to find him in his office on my first try, but to my surprise he refused to open his office door. He asked me all sorts of questions about who I was and what kind of research I was doing, and he even made me speak in English. I thought he was horribly rude and was getting ready to leave when he opened the door, welcomed me into his office, and explained that he was worried I was a thief. After that, I learned to call professors at home and arrange a time and place to visit; frequently, they then invited me to stop by their home.

In the early sixties, Professor Camargo had published a book called *Spiritism and Umbanda* (1961), and I thought he would be a good source of advice. When I arrived and, after a short wait, was offered a seat in his office, I immediately noticed a copy of Cavalcanti's book. "Have you seen this?" he asked.

"Yes. I just attended the book-signing party in Rio," I answered.

"What did you think of it?" he asked.

"I think it's a very thorough ethnography," I answered. "I talked with Maria Laura, and she agreed that I should continue with my project since there was still so much to write about regarding the Spiritist movement."

"I would agree with that," he said, "but maybe in a different way. It's also a question of method. There always seems to be such a gap between you anthropologists and we sociologists."

My students are always confused about the differences between sociologists and anthropologists, and from the outside the two sibling social science tribes may seem indistinguishable. However, as I was to learn, the gulf between the anthropologists of Rio and the sociologists of São Paulo was very wide. In the United States, sociologists historically have studied people in cities or on farms, whereas cultural anthropologists have focused more on isolated communities of indigenous peoples or small-scale societies in Third World

countries. Likewise, sociologists tend to be interested in how interests and social structures shape ideas and practices within capitalist society, whereas anthropologists tend to be more interested in the differences among cultures and the way different groups of people see the world. American sociologists are also more likely to use quantitative methods, whereas we anthropologists tend to opt for ethnographic fieldwork. Of course, like the spirit religions in Brazil, the distinctions between sociologists and anthropologists are in fact much more blurred, but these characterizations can serve as a good first approximation.

As I was to learn, in Brazil the distinction between sociologists from São Paulo and anthropologists from Rio had become overlaid with other meanings. To begin, neither sociologists nor anthropologists in Brazil were very interested in the heavy-duty, number-crunching type of social science that was popular in American sociology. Both were known to reject the method as the silly (and expensive) positivism of the gringos. Rather, in Brazil the disciplinary distinction seemed to operate more along political and theoretical lines. The Paulista sociologists I met tended to be influenced by Marxist theory, and many were also actively involved in left-wing politics. Although the Carioca anthropologists also considered themselves leftist, the ones I met were not as involved in politics as were the Paulista sociologists. One radical American social scientist told me that he found the Paulistas refreshing, even if their rather orthodox Marxism seemed a bit *ultrapassado*, a word that had the connotations of "overdone" as well as "very passé." The Carioca anthropologists saw themselves as more up-to-date and cosmopolitan, and they tended to turn to post-Marxist French theory as a source of inspiration. Of course, from the Paulista perspective, the Carioca anthropologists were probably hopeless reactionaries who still clung to a humanist vision of anthropology as the study of cultural differences and the human condition.

Regarding the Carioca anthropologist Cavalcanti, the Paulista sociologist Camargo went on: "She and I just don't agree on the mediumistic continuum," he said. He wasn't

angry or even critical; there was just a certain tone of sad resolution in his voice. He was referring to his theory that the boundaries between Spiritism and Umbanda were fuzzy, and that different centers mixed Umbanda and Spiritism to different degrees, such that there appeared to be a continuum between the erudite, European or Asian spirits of Spiritism and the more popular, African slave or Native American spirits of Umbanda.

"Listen to this," he said, opening the book. I do not remember exactly what passages he read, but one of them was certainly the following: " 'Camargo perceives the relationship between these two religions as a continuum because he begins with categories that are exterior to the religious forms in question. From my point of view, the relationship between Spiritism and Umbanda should be thought about beginning with the internal characteristics of the two religious systems' " (Cavalcanti 1983). He looked up from the book. "Somewhere else she says I'm 'ethnocentric'; let's see where that is. No, I can't find it now. But the point is you can't stop with the views of the actors. You should begin with their viewpoint, but you have to go on to a sociological explanations. Otherwise, what use is social science?"

"I think I see your point," I said politely, but I was not sure I really agreed. I had just spent three years of graduate study that emphasized a kind of cultural anthropology that focused on interpreting cultural meaning rather than on developing sociological explanations.

"Don't get me wrong," he added, calmly and quietly. "It's a fine book. But she tries so hard to be faithful to the Spiritist categories of thought that it ends up reading like a Spiritist book."

"As an anthropologist, she would probably take that as a compliment," I said.

"You probably don't agree with me. And I'm sure she would say the same about me."

"How so?"

"Oh, that I have my own biases. But I'll tell you what my main bias is: I believe social science should try to explain

social phenomena. There's just too much of this interpretive stuff these days. Maybe it's just a younger generation. You know, sometimes I miss Bastide," he said, looking off into the distance. He was referring to the French anthropologist/sociologist Roger Bastide, who had come to Brazil in the 1930s along with several other French social scientists, including the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, in order to help found the now prestigious Department of Social Sciences of the University of São Paulo. Bastide returned to France in 1954 and, with the exception of two trips back to Brazil, remained there until his death in 1974. He was the author of the magisterial book *The African Religions of Brazil* (1978), and he developed a modified Marxist view of the religious system that led him to criticize Camargo in an article published in 1967.

"He didn't like my theory any more than Cavalcanti did," Camargo went on, "but at least he had good sociological reasons—reasons that, by the way, I still dispute—but you see? That's the point. With Bastide, we could have a dispute. But what can I say to this kind of argument? Despite our differences, at least he and I believed you could explain something with social science."

We talked for a while longer, mainly about Bastide and politics—I remember him saying at one point, "I am an old man of the left"—and then he offered to help me with my project in any way that he could. I did not seek him out on my next trip to Brazil—my connections and allegiances were more with the anthropologists of Rio than the sociologists of São Paulo—but I left with a great deal of respect for this gentle man of firm convictions. I later wrote an article (1989a) about how the differing points of view of Bastide, Camargo, and Cavalcanti corresponded to the differing points of view of the Candomblé, the Catholic church, and the Spiritist movement. After I finished writing the article, I learned that Professor Camargo had died. I have tried to report this conversation as accurately as my memory allowed, and I hope this report honors his memory and the spirit of his convictions.

I returned from São Paulo to Campinas, from which I planned to embark on a twenty-one-day tour of Brazil. Among the many helpful hints of Tom Holloway, the Brazilianist on my committee back at Cornell, was the suggestion that I buy a twenty-one-day air pass, because he thought it would be a good way to get a sense of the country. Dana helped me plan a whirlwind schedule: Belém, Manaus, Brasília, Salvador, Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo. The trip was scheduled to begin on Monday, July 12, so I still had some free time. I decided to follow the advice of some Spiritists I had met on a bus and make my pilgrimage to Uberaba, a small city in the state of Minas Gerais and the home of Chico Xavier ('shee-ko shah-vee-ayrh).

Francisco Cândido "Chico" Xavier is probably the best known of the "psychographic" mediums, that is, mediums who receive spirits and write down their messages while in a trancelike state. In English, the term *automatic writing* has been used for what in Portuguese is called "psychography" (*psicografia*). Xavier has served as medium-author for hundreds of books that Spiritists claim have sold nearly as many as the popular author Jorge Amado. The best known of Xavier's "ghost writers" are Brother X, said to be the Brazilian poet Humberto Campos; Emmanuel, said to be the spirit of the colonial Jesuit Manuel da Nóbrega; and André Luiz, said to be the spirit of the medical researcher Carlos Chagas. The last spirit is the author of the sixteen-book series called Nosso Lar (Our Home). The series begins with a book of the same title, which provides a description of life in Nosso Lar, the name of the celestial colony where Spiritists believe Brazilians go when they die. Located directly over Rio de Janeiro, Nosso Lar is organized around six government bureaucracies and ruled by a benevolent dictator who has descended from higher planes to run the colony as charity work (see Hess 1991a; Xavier 1944). Chico Xavier holds sessions in his Spiritist center named after the spirit André Luiz. This terrestrial Nosso Lar is located in Uberaba, and no description of the

Spiritist movement would be complete without at least some mention of Chico's work.

Dana suggested that I take the train. "It would be a great way to see the Brazilian countryside," she told me, "and you'll also get to meet people. I love taking the train." However, Dana was more fluent and extroverted than I, and she was also a very beautiful woman, so I have no doubt that she made many friends on her train trips. Mine was less exciting. The train left Campinas about an hour late, and it fell more and more behind schedule as we headed into the increasingly dry terrain of the Brazilian hinterlands. Still, I met a very kind family from the interior—I was their first American and they my first Brazilian peasants—and for a passenger accustomed to the delays of Amtrak's routes in upstate New York, the trip was not at all bad. In fact, when I thought about another, more heroic trip to the interior made by another Brazilianist, Claude Lévi-Strauss—in the days when anthropologists studied tribes, traveled by mule train, and all that—I realized my trip was downright luxurious. I even witnessed a spectacular sunset over the dry hills.

I arrived late in Uberaba, and the taxi driver took me to a Novotel, a clean, modern hotel that reminded me of a Holiday Inn. When I told him I was going to Chico's session, he asked me, "Would you like me to wait?"

"No, that's not necessary," I answered.

"I'll wait if you want," he offered.

"It may be a while. I plan to take a shower."

"That's alright," he said.

"Well, if you want, that's fine."

I figured he was offering to wait because he did not have anything else to do. It looked like a small town and maybe I was the only fare around. I did not understand that he was planning to sit there and keep the meter running, and I also did not realize what he had done until I was already in the taxi on the way to Chico Xavier's center. Until that point, I had only taken taxis with other friends, who had protected me from their shenanigans. The driver protested, and I protested back; then we bargained a little, and we both acted unhappy

with the final deal. When I thought of what his life was like, of the difficulty of living in this inflation-ridden society, I was not as unhappy as I pretended. It really had not come out to very much in dollars. Over the years, however, I think I lost a minor fortune to Brazilian cabbies.

When I arrived at the center, there was already a crowd of people inside the center and spilling out into the courtyard. Chico was inside, locked in a closed room writing out his messages. Those who arrived early and made it onto the list received a personal message from a deceased relative or a higher spirit, and one man told me that if I had come earlier in the day, I could have seen Chico writing out homeopathic prescriptions. One or two people shared their messages with me: they were generally comforting notes of reassurance filled with uplifting Christian phrases; and they were not, as I half expected, full of the names, places, and other identifiable facts that William James (1960) had reported for the famous Spiritualist medium, Leonora Piper.

Chico was a modern saint: every weekend hundreds made their pilgrimage to Uberaba. The Spiritist intellectuals in São Paulo have even put together a book in four languages—Portuguese, Swedish, English, and French—proposing that he receive the Nobel Peace Prize, the twentieth century's equivalent of canonization. His Spiritist center was a humble, two-room building with stuccoed walls painted an ordinary green, and the main room was smaller than most classrooms. In short, Chico Xavier's Spiritist center was a postcard setting for a saint: simple and honest, a Brazilian version of a Norman Rockwell church.

When I arrived, the session was already underway. The dozens of pilgrims were crowded into the small room, peering in through the windows and spilling out the door, some standing, some sitting. Outside under the pavilion more were gathered: sitting, standing, smoking, talking, praying, reading, sleeping, but not writing. A tingle of anticipation hung in the air as we waited for Chico to come out. Inside this building was a small room behind a sky-blue closed door. Inside this inner chamber Chico was sitting and writing his

personal messages to the people waiting outside. Every now and then a bundle of papers slid through a slot in the door and the people all perked up briefly ("Chico just finished another batch of messages"). A woman wearing a red dress ambled over to the door, picked up the papers, and returned to the table in the center of the room.

At the table sat the mediums, the members of the center. The corpus of Allan Kardec was stacked upon the table: *The Book of the Spirits*, *The Book of the Mediums*, *Heaven and Hell*, *Genesis*, *The Gospel According to Spiritism*, and *Posthumous Writings*. (The latter meant posthumous publications in the conventional sense—to my knowledge, no Brazilian medium since the nineteenth century has received Kardec's spirit.) Each Spiritist took a turn, a long one, at reading passages from the well-thumbed works of the master and following up each passage with a long exegesis that had the ring of an evangelical sermon. They selected the most religious, rather than the scientific, passages from Kardec's vast work, and they spoke grandiloquently of charity, free will, the law of cause and effect, spiritual evolution, reincarnation, the coming millennium, Brazil's special destiny as the land of the Southern Cross, and, of course, mediumship.

No one was listening with any intentness, except perhaps for me, fascinated by the synthesis of doctrines, by the way the speakers were Brazilianizing a discourse produced in nineteenth-century France, by their transformation of French pedagogy into Latino oratory. Eventually even I felt my attention flag. I began to pay less attention to the lectures and more to the faces in the room. The faces revealed mainly European features; there were very few faces with African features and only a slightly larger sprinkling of people who looked as though they could trace some of their ancestors to Native Americans. Their clothing marked them as members of the Brazilian middle class, even down to a T-shirt with a New York Jets insignia, and the working class seemed conspicuously absent. The working class, after all, has to work, and in Brazil that often means ten-hour days, including Saturdays and sometimes Sundays, at a minimum wage ten times less

that in the United States. The average worker lacks the time, the energy, and most of all the money to make the pilgrimage to Uberaba.

When people paid attention, they watched the woman in the red dress, the secretary's secretary. (Chico was, after all, only a secretary to the spirits.) In Brazil, patriarchy that it is, most of the famous Spiritist mediums are men. Still, there are many exceptions, and I noticed that women mediums frequently predominated in local centers. There are also many cases of Spiritist centers run by women, and I would say that on the whole women seem to have more power and status in Spiritism than in Brazilian society at large, even if at the upper levels Spiritism is still dominated by men. Chico's secretary sat at the table and officiously prepared the messages. At the top of each page was a name, an age, and an address (or some other vital statistic), either printed, typed, or handwritten, and at the bottom of the same page or on the back was a barely legible message scrawled by the hand of Chico Xavier. The woman neatly folded each page above the message, tore the paper in half, demarcating the sacred from the profane, and she then stapled the name and vital statistics to the writing of Chico Xavier. She moved very self-importantly and deliberately, knowing that dozens were eagerly awaiting word from the other side. There was, however, no malice in her manner; it was just the characteristic pace of the Brazilian bureaucrat. In Roberto DaMatta's terms (1991), she was someone who was linked personally to Chico and therefore a "person," (*pessoa*, a word that has the connotation of an "insider"). In contrast, those of us who were waiting were only "individuals" (*indivíduos*, or "outsiders"), and therefore completely dependent on her good graces.

Chico's secretary slowly removed herself from the table and worked her way through the crowd to an area in the outer courtyard beyond the big porch. There, under an electric light and the stars above, she read off the names and handed over the messages. For those who were not present when their names were called, she put their names on the bottom of the pile and did not return to them until she had called off the

entire roster: no favoritism here. Many were, in fact, not present, a surprising fact given the difficulty one has in gaining a place among the limited number of message recipients, but then it was late, and most likely those not present had already gone home to bed.

The woman repeated the entire process, and the mediums inside continued to exhort, sermonize, and scripturalize, while we continued to wait. Ritual, as Lévi-Strauss (1981) once noted, derives its peculiar power from repetition, which, I might add, is boring. So we waited, bored, and our attention shifted from one subject to the other, from one face to the other, floor to ceiling, window to wall, sight to sound, with the ever-present sound of the words emanating from the mediums at the table. We waited an interminably long time, all the longer because we did not know when Chico would finally come out from behind his door: ten-thirty, a quarter to eleven (any minute, the old-timers said), eleven, a quarter past, eleven-thirty (sighs of annoyance detectable, but muffled since they were in bad form), a quarter to twelve, ten of, five of (mounting anticipation), *midnight* . . . a quarter past, half past, and we were still waiting. The cold breeze coming in through the door and windows cut through those of us on the outer periphery, but fortunately there were enough people on the inside who got tired of standing that we could eventually work our way in.

Finally, sometime around one in the morning, Chico Xavier came out from his writing closet. Dressed in a sky-blue suit, perhaps not made of polyester but definitely not the height of fashion, he electrified the room full of people lecturing, chitchatting, reading, snoozing, and giggling. Everything stopped. Those who had chairs stood on top of them, and the rest of us stood on our tiptoes or crowded in through the windows. He had a withered face and a saint's smile, and his black toupee made him look years younger than he was. He moved through the room oblivious to our attention, stopping with each friend to offer a hug, a pat on the back, and a few kind, but to us inaudible, words. I expected a speech or a few words from him, but instead he got right down to busi-

ness, moving directly to his seat at the table, beneath a plaque that hung on the wall behind him (there are no crucifixes in Spiritist centers) and depicted a heart with flowers with the following words:

> Here, with the name of
> "Spiritist Group of the Prayer"
> functions the
> Evangelical Cult of the Home
> of Brother Francisco Xavier
> in the house of his Property.

If before no one was listening, now everyone was watching as brother Francisco Xavier put his left hand to his forehead, covered his eyes, and sank into a trancelike state. Suddenly the other sign on the wall, "Silence is required," became relevant as all eyes turned to him in reverent silence. He was flanked by two aides: the one sitting on his left supplied him with paper and the one on the right with pencils. The spirits apparently could not see—they could only write—so they needed all the help they could get just to keep the pencil connected to the paper. Between the pencil and the paper was Chico's hand, the medium's medium. The backdrop to the blind scrawl was classical music, none of it choral, which permeated the room through a loudspeaker managed by Chico's two African-Brazilian assistants. Their smiles and gay joviality seemed somewhat out-of-place in this serious atmosphere; they brought to mind the facile comparison with the Candomblés of Salvador about which I had heard so much. In a sense, Chico was living proof that the European side of this Afro-Latin culture, the side that includes the legacies of writing and classical music, also possessed a "shaman" as powerful as the greatest of the Candomblé priestesses of Bahia.

Chico sat at the table and concentrated, his head resting in one hand as the other hand wrote blindly. We watched motionlessly as his hand moved rapidly across the page. It was not quite the paranormal lightning speed that I had seen described in the Spiritist books, but he wrote very fast indeed, faster than my students who have gone more than two min-

utes beyond my last call to hand in a final exam. We stood, deadpan, watching the hand write, witnesses to the sign that spirits could indeed communicate, seeing in the almost unreadable scrawl a mirrorlike testimony to our own immortality: if spirits write through Chico's hand, then we, too, could live beyond the grave. I watched myself slip out of my scientific skepticism and sense for a moment that I was in fact in the presence of spirits. For me, and undoubtedly for many others, to watch Chico's hand moving blindly over the page, leaving behind traces of automatic writing, was also to watch one's own skepticism—at least for a fleeting moment—be erased in the presence of spirits.

However, the magic of the moment wore off quickly. Rapture soon faded to boredom and the hands-over-the-forehead-imitating-Chico's-concentration soon became transparent guises for sleep instead of trance. Chico wrote and wrote, and the persistent few worked their way into a position where they could take a peek at his scrawl over his shoulder. Occasionally, the mediums invited a member from the room to sit at the table, and at one point I was one of the privileged. I sat at the table and concentrated, pen in one hand and head in the other, and wondered if Ralph, my roommate in college who had been killed in a car accident six months after we graduated, might send a message, either directly through my own hand or through Chico's.

My hand did not move. Unlike Chico, I did not have the gift, the faith, or the right amount of willing suspension of disbelief. My automatic writing lesson ended in failure. Defeated, I returned to the crowd, which watched, sat, whispered, slept, read Spiritist texts, or scribbled ethnographic notes on the greasy wrappers of *salgadinhos*, the stuffed vegetable and meat pastries that a vendor was selling out on the street. As the night progressed, the room grew very cold from the breezes that came down off the plains and whipped through the window. Slowly, the crowd thinned out, and those of us who were left shut the windows. Nobody seemed to know when the session would end, and I was exhausted from the train ride. I did what no seasoned ethnographer would do (or

write about doing): I gave up. I suppose I was worried that the taxi driver was going to go home and that they would close down the center and I would be left stranded in the predawn night in an unfamiliar neighborhood without a way back to the hotel. I left about three or three-thirty, with Chico still writing and the classical music still playing.

There was no session the next day, so after walking around the town I decided to go back to Campinas. At the bus station, I struck up a conversation with two middle-aged women whom I recognized from the session, and they filled me in on what I had missed. At about four or five in the morning, Chico finally stopped writing and read the messages, which consisted of a long and very serious statement from Emmanuel; a personal message from a relative to two Japanese women; a message to a mother from her ten-year-old girl who had been killed in a car accident the preceding year; and two or three other personal communications—but no messages from an American boy killed in a car accident in California.

FROM UBERABA TO SALVADOR

From Uberaba, I returned to Campinas, and then I flew to Belém, Manaus, and Brasília. I happened to arrive in Belém during the meetings of the SBPC, the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Sciences, and I attended several of the sessions. The tenor of the academic conference was different from any that I had attended in the United States or Europe. The first difference that caught my eye was the casual clothing that the men and women were wearing, clearly a necessity in the sweltering heat of this equatorial town. More interesting, I noticed that the question-and-answer sessions were extraordinarily polite and that criticism, unless it was directed at some outside force (such as the government), was often so subtle that I was not sure if the scholars and scientists were indeed criticizing each other. As I was to learn later, when auditing some anthropology classes at the National Museum, the polite style was characteristic of Brazilian academic social

relations. Because Brazilians tend to distinguish less sharply than Americans between their roles as scientists and their roles as friends, they tend to take criticism more personally. As a result, one has to learn to read between the lines of extremely polite commentaries and declarations of principles in order to understand who or what is being criticized (on this point, see DaMatta 1991; Kant de Lima 1992; Hess 1991b). The studied politeness of Brazilians was something that would drive New Yorkers crazy, but as a midwesterner I adapted to it more easily.

The next city I visited was Brasília, which appeared to fulfill its tourist brochure promise: a beautiful modern city of smooth, curved buildings and gracious highways, a completely "rational" city that had been planned and built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Brasília was a textbook example of modernist urban planning (Holston 1989). From above, the city looked like a giant airplane, a huge symbol of speed, modernity, and human hubris. Of course, much like the ancient Nazca drawings, the airplane design was only visible from above: it was for the enjoyment of the planners and government air travelers, our modern gods, rather than the people on the ground.

On the ground and up close, the new city seemed prematurely run-down. It reminded me of the American urban housing projects from Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, modern but already out-of-date and deteriorating. Yet, the deterioration of Brasília was nothing in comparison with the poor building quality of the satellite cities where the tourist rarely goes. Located about an hour outside of Brasília, the satellite cities are home to the working class and, as Karl Marx called them, the lumpenproletariat—the truly destitute. Close enough to Brasília to provide a cheap source of manual labor, the satellite cites are far enough away from the city for their visible poverty not to embarrass the Brazilian government, which tried to hide its oppressive social policies from visiting foreign dignitaries. Brasília is like a giant Hollywood Wild West set, a city of façades behind which stands the desert reality of the satellite cities.

On the outskirts of the satellite city of Planaltina was an esoteric commune known as the Valley of the Dawn. The dusty, dry commune looked like it could have been someone's ranch except that the grounds included several buildings constructed in the shape of a pyramid. I also found two ponds, one of which was structured in the shape of the star of David. Unfortunately, I did not get a good taste of the beliefs and practices of the community because I arrived on a day when the leader of the community, a medium known as Aunt Neiva, was not present. Although there was little activity on that day, I talked with some of the people in the bookstore and attended one of their chanting ceremonies in the temple. The mediums of this spiritual community received the spirits of Umbanda, but the temples I visited did not look very much like those of Umbanda, and indeed the members of the Valley of the Dawn denied affiliation with any religious group. The members walked around in long, hooded robes like those of the *Star Wars* druid Obi-Wan Kenobi, and inside one of the buildings that I visited, the mediums sat in meditative positions and chanted like medieval monks. The statues inside the buildings, however, were not at all reminiscent of a medieval monastery: they included occult symbols such as a crescent moon that signaled the community's belief in their affiliation with ancient civilizations. If Brasília was a Hollywood Wild West facade, the Valley of the Dawn was a Fellini set (see also Holston 1992).

From Brasília I journeyed to Salvador, the traditional home of the African-Brazilian religions. The full name of the city is Salvador da Bahia, and it is sometimes just called Bahia, even though that name makes it easy to confuse the city with the state of the same name. The city is the old colonial capital of Brazil, and much of the original architecture survives. There are, so they say, at least 365 Catholic churches in the city, one for each day of the year. I visited several of the most famous of them, and they were indeed spectacular. Yet, Salvador is known less for its Catholic churches or Portuguese colonial architecture than for its status as the capital of African culture in Brazil. The majority of the population has at least some

roots in Africa, and indeed when I walked through the city I felt as if I were in an African city. As the capital of African culture in Brazil, Salvador was home to the Candomblé, and my main goal was to attend one of the Candomblé ceremonies.

Since I knew no one in the town but I still wanted to see a traditional Yoruba Candomblé temple, I inquired at the tourist office where I might attend a ceremony. The woman in the tourist office gave me information on where I could attend a Candomblé ceremony, and I decided on a birthday celebration for Nanã Burucú, the mother of the *orixás*. Forty years ago, it would have been more appropriate to inquire at the police station. At that time the African-Brazilian religions were highly illegal and subject to a great deal of police persecution, as Jorge Amado describes quite vividly in his novel *Tent of Miracles*. Although Candomblé was subject to police persecution, the white propertied class nevertheless respected and feared the African priests and priestesses. That attitude probably dates back to the earliest days of colonialism, when the Portuguese traders are said to have bowed before the great West African kings as they did for other foreign dignitaries. Today, the mixture of respect and fear has taken a new turn as the temples of Candomblé have become part of the tourist industry. Although Bahian Candomblé is not an artificial product of the culture industry, it is still undoubtedly undergoing significant changes in response to its new economic and cultural status (see Silverstein 1994).

Yoruba (or Nagô) religion is very complicated, and many have compared the *orixás* to the ancient Greek gods. Xangô, like Zeus, is the lord of thunder and a seducer; he is also associated with rocks and rocky places. Ogum, like Hephaestus, is the forger of metals, and like Ares he is a warrior. Iemanjá, the ruler the seas, could be called a female Poseidon; Exu, like Hermes, lords over the crossroads and mediates between the humans and the gods; Oxum is the goddess of fresh water and vanity, perhaps a female African Narcissus; and Iansã, like Aphrodite, is the goddess of love but also of death and, like Aeolus, the wind. I have often wondered if there was some sort of historical connection between the Yoruba and

Greek pantheons. The idea became more plausible to me after a conversation with the political scientist and classicist Martin Bernal, who happened to have an office next door to mine when I was writing up my dissertation and he was working on *Black Athena*. One day, he stopped and explained to me his theory about the Egyptian influence on the Greeks. I think he wanted to test it out on me and to see whether or not I, an anthropologist, found it as far-fetched as the classicists thought. The theory sounded plausible to me, and I wondered if the Egyptians might have had a similar influence on the Yoruba, which would account for the similarities between the Greek and Yoruba pantheons.

Of course, it is probably easy to find similarities between almost any two polytheistic pantheons of large-scale, agricultural societies. Perhaps the human mind has a proclivity to make comparisons and to draw equivalences in unfamiliar settings. Certainly, the slaves and freed African-Brazilians found another series of identifications, known as "syncretisms," more useful: they identified the *orixás* with Catholic saints, which helped them to avoid some religious persecution. These identifications vary throughout Brazil, but Iemanjá and Oxum are generally Mary, Oxalá Jesus, Xangô St. Jerome, Iansã St. Barbara, Ogum St. George, and so on. (For tables of correspondences, see Bastide 1978:195, 264–67.)

That evening, I took a taxi to the Candomblé *terreiro* or "temple" that the tourist office had suggested. There, I found another syncretism, one of tourists—from Argentines to Germans—and I braced myself for an ersatz Candomblé. However, the tourist Candomblés are not necessarily any less "genuine" than the "real" ones, and my friend Patric Giesler, a fellow Brazilianist and anthropologist who is very familiar with the Candomblés of Salvador, told me that sometimes the Candomblés attended by tourists are among the most famous and traditional of the city. The Candomblé that I attended was not one of the famous ones, but the celebration of the *orixá*'s birthday included the beautiful formal dresses, dances, and songs of the traditional Candomblé ceremonies.

The whole focus of the ceremony was quite different from

Spiritism or Umbanda. Spiritism tends to focus on books and study, and Spiritists connect their healing practices (such as the laying on of hands or passes) with evangelization. Umbanda is more pragmatic; it focuses on the practicalities of giving advice to clients or clearing their bodies of evil energies and spirits. Candomblé, in contrast, is much more of a religion, and its rituals focus more on paying homage to the *orixás*. I would almost call the form of the ceremony "worship," except that "worship" is a very Western term. To begin, the *orixás* come to earth rather than remain in heaven, and when they are on the terrestrial plane they tend to enjoy earthly pleasures such as dancing and eating. Rather than compare Candomblé to a mass or worship service, it might make more sense to compare it to the processions, pageantry, and even the religious theater (*autos*) of traditional folk Catholicism. From this perspective, Candomblé and Catholicism seem more similar to each other than either do to Spiritism or Umbanda. Yet, the Candomblé ceremony has much more dancing and singing than most Western religious ceremonies, except perhaps African-American church services. Indeed, I thought of African-American Protestant services when I saw the Candomblé, and when the mother-of-the-saints (the high priestess or leading medium) paraded into the room, I thought of the song "When the Saints Come Marching In." The African-American culture of the United States has never looked the same to me after living in Brazil. It is hard to believe that people could label the Yoruba religion "voodoo" and equate it with black magic, unless they were doing so to put down the competition.

What intrigued me more than the Candomblé ceremony was the Congress of the *Orixás*. By coincidence it was being held that week in the new conference center on the outskirts of Salvador, so I spent a day attending its sessions. Writers, anthropologists, politicians, mothers-of-the-saints, and even visitors from Nigeria had all come to exchange lectures and viewpoints. Far from being an academic conference, this was the first of a genre of conferences to which I was to grow more accustomed in 1985. The operative principle was less the goal

of exchanging ideas among professionals or scholars and more one of allowing all voices to be heard. From some of the talks, I gathered that tensions had emerged between the Nigerians and the Brazilians. The Africans had accused the Brazilians of corrupting African traditions, and the Brazilians—who in fact had maintained at least some African traditions in a "purer" form than they exist in present-day Africa—told the Africans that their charges were not true. Even if they were, the Brazilians went on, they had their own path and were not about to be told how to think and act in the name of an ambiguous concept of "African purity," because African religion itself had changed dramatically over the centuries. I wondered if the Nigerian/Brazilian misunderstandings might have had something to do with the differing modes of conference discourse in Anglo-Saxon and Brazilian culture. The Nigerians may well have been influenced by British standards of conference debating, which could only seem polemical and confrontational in contrast with the subtle and delicate Brazilian manner that is associated with the linguistic false friend *debater*.

Toward the end of the conference we all listened to Mãe Menininha (my may-nee-'nee-nyah), the great matriarch of the African-Brazilian religions. I had first read about her in some of the classics of African-Brazilian ethnography. She was a young mother-of-the-saints back in the 1930s, when Edison Carneiro was researching his ethnographic monograph, *Candomblés of Bahia*, and Ruth Landes was doing fieldwork for what eventually became her fieldwork account, *The City of Women*. During Mãe Menininha's speech, the "queen of the Candomblés" tried to bring everyone together: she said that we had heard from all walks of life and all sorts of different perspectives, and sometimes people had disagreed, but we had to remember that we all—Catholic, Spiritist, or mothers-of-the-saints—were children of the same God.

Salvador da Bahia is a magical city, and I have heard from people who live there that its magic has a way of working itself into one's life, even for gringos. I got a taste of that magic as I was leaving the conference, when on the walk back to the

bus stop I happened to meet a woman who turned out to share with me a number of very specific interests. We even turned out to have friends in common, and we ourselves became friends. I could not help but wonder if the *orixás* had arranged this felicitous synchronicity.

CURITIBA

I experienced a similar ecumenical spirit to that of Mãe Menininha in the next city I visited, Curitiba. Arriving there at the end of the afternoon in late July, I was immediately reminded that July in Brazil is the equivalent of January in the United States. Whereas Salvador was warm, arid, and tropical, Curitiba was in the middle of a Brazilian winter. Brazil has a reputation for being a tropical country, but from São Paulo to the south the winters can get very cold, and in some highland parts of the south it even snows.

I had expected to see another Brazil in Curitiba, which has an international reputation as a well-run and well-planned city. One friend described the city to me as an example of "the part of Brazil that turned out right," and almost everyone described Curitiba as "more European" or "cleaner." I soon learned that those words were euphemisms that the white middle class used to describe places where there were fewer poor people of African and Native American descent. True enough, I did notice some blondes on the street, evidence of the descendants of Polish and German immigrants, and some of the buildings looked like they had been transported from European cities. However, in Curitiba, Florianópolis, Porto Alegre, and the other cities of the south I was struck more by the demographic continuity with the rest of Brazil than by a "European" flavor that the middle class of Rio and São Paulo seemed to think existed there. Perhaps if I had come twenty years earlier, those descriptions of another Brazil might have been more accurate, but by the 1980s the cities of southern Brazil had also become home to neighborhoods inhabited by poor people who had migrated down from the north with the hope of finding a better life. During the second half of the

twentieth century, it appears that Brazil had experienced a great migration from the north to the south, much as the United States had experienced a similar migration in the opposite direction during the early part of the twentieth century.

In Curitiba, I met Octávio Melchíades Ulysséa and Neida Ulysséa (oo-lee-'say-yah), a Spiritist couple about my parents' age whom Doctor Hernani had recommended that I visit. They took me out to lunch at a *churrascaria*, a restaurant typical of southern Brazil, where the waiters come around with huge spits of meat and slice off portions selected by the customers. After we had broken the ice and established our friendship, Octávio Ulysséa asked the inevitable question that anthropologists often encounter from their informants: "What do you think?"

To paint myself as a complete skeptic in religious matters would mark me as a "materialist" and therefore someone opposed to Spiritism. That self-description would have made research very difficult. More important, because I consider myself more of an open-minded agnostic than a materialist in religious matters, to accept the label of a materialist would have been a misrepresentation. I also had a special elective affinity with the Spiritists of Brazil: I had grown up in a religious household where stories of spiritual healing and psychic phenomena were, if not common dinner-table conversation, at least encountered with the same open-mindedness as our other discussions of religion, ecumenicism, gnosticism, existentialist philosophy, and contemporary psychology. I had therefore gradually developed several stock answers to the question.

One tactic was to say diplomatically, "I believe some things in this world are just unexplained." Whenever I used that answer, I thought of the famous more-things-in-heaven-and-earth passage from *Hamlet*. It always reminded me of an anecdote told by the journalist João do Rio (Paulo Barreto) in his book *The Religions of Rio*, a descriptive account of Carioca religion at the turn of the century. He reports, straightforwardly and without a *sic*, that in discussing the spirit world, a Spiri-

tist once quoted the famous Shakespearean phrase to him as follows: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio; there are more dreams in your philosophy." (I have since had clarification on the point: the Spiritist was commenting on his friend's materialist philosophy and by no means misquoting the Bard.)

Most of the time when Spiritists asked me what I thought, they were trying less to gauge whether I was for them or against them than to understand me better. So another tactic was to talk about my upbringing, how I had grown up in a liberal Presbyterian family. The disadvantage of the "Presbyterian answer" was that it was somewhat misleading, since I never joined the church as an adult and I no longer consider myself part of the flock. Furthermore, because almost all Protestants in Brazil are very evangelical and strongly opposed to Spiritism (which Protestants tend to view as "devil worship"), the answer also raised suspicions among Spiritists. As a result the family background answer usually left me trying to convince them that my family's form of Protestantism was the liberal, ecumenical type. That was no easy task; they tended to look at me as if they were wondering whether or not I was making up this liberal form of Protestantism. Other times, however, the answer led to a comment such as: "Then you are searching for something in Brazil," and to the ambiguous answer, "Yes."

More often, I launched into a story that I had heard many times growing up. When I was six or seven, my maternal grandmother suffered from a heart attack. She was in the hospital, and the doctors said that she was recovering, so everyone went home relieved. That night, when my great Aunt Jessie, my grandmother's sister-in-law, was going to bed, she saw an apparition of my grandmother at the foot of the bed. "Is that you?" she asked my grandmother, but my grandmother disappeared. Aunt Jessie noted the time, and the next day she found out that my grandmother had died at that very moment.

I was well aware that a scientist did not have to have recourse to parapsychology, let alone Spiritism, to explain the

phenomena known as "crisis apparitions," but Spiritists never raised alternative explanations with me. The story sufficed to show interest and open-mindedness, as well as to tell them a little about myself, so this answer was generally all that was needed. I also learned that it did not matter if I was a Spiritist, as long as I was a "spiritualist," that is, not a materialist. It turned out that there was a wide variation of belief and skepticism within the Spiritist movement, and many of the younger Brazilians who were involved in Spiritism were somewhat skeptical of the claims of a large number of the older Spiritist mediums. Their elders, however, organized the varieties of skepticism and belief along a scale of evolutionary development: if I was relatively skeptical, I was also relatively young and would mature in the direction of their beliefs.

In 1983, however, I had not yet discovered the grandma's ghost answer, so I told Ulysséa and Neida about my upbringing as a Presbyterian, and then I explained to them that my parents were not the evangelical types that are so common in Brazil. They seemed to understand; in southern Brazil there is a tradition of "liberal Protestantism," although it is apparently more common among Lutherans and Methodists than Presbyterians. As if to show me that they had accepted me (at least as much as southern Brazilians accept Paulistas), Ulysséa said to me later in the lunch, "I see a figure behind your back. Has anyone told you that before?"

"No," I answered.

"It looks like a Paulista. I bet you were a Paulista in your past life."

I was not sure exactly what his comment meant. I might have preferred to be a Carioca, because they have beaches, and I might have felt more accepted if he had found a "Curitibense" behind my back, but then he might have thought that sort of claim would strain my credulity. Paulistas are considered hard-working and modern, somewhat like Americans, whereas Cariocas are often considered beach bums, so I took his comment to suggest an acceptance of commonality with difference.

Just as Ulysséa and Neida wanted to get to know me, I also

wanted to get to know my new Spiritist friends. They were important people to get to know, since they were the founders and leaders of a Spiritist college called the Faculdade Bezerra de Menezes. A medical doctor and politician who died in 1900, Bezerra de Menezes is sometimes called the "Brazilian Kardec." Spiritists also refer to him as the "unifier" of Spiritism, just as Kardec was its "codifier." In the Spiritist literature, Menezes is depicted as a self-abnegating man who, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, brought together the quarreling factions of the Spiritist movement under the umbrella of the Brazilian Spiritist Federation in Rio. When I carefully examined the available historical documents, which with a few exceptions are zealously guarded by the leaders of the Brazilian Spiritist Federation and not available for consultation, I found that the history does not quite bear out the legend (Hess 1987b, 1991b). Rather, the division between intellectual and evangelical Spiritists runs like an Ariadne's thread through the history of sectarian schisms in the Spiritist movement. Bezerra de Menezes may have been a unifier, but it was a short-lived and incomplete unification. Nevertheless, he remains a symbol of the ideal of Spiritist unity and self-abnegation.

I like to picture Octávio Ulysséa as a kind of latter-day Menezes. Trained as a sociologist, he was acutely aware that the dogmatic and snobbish attitudes that many of his brethren in the Spiritist movement hold toward Umbanda and the African-Brazilian religions were only sapping the movement's vitality. Ulysséa intentionally used the term "spiritualist" (*espiritualista*), which can include Christians of any stripe, not to mention Buddhists, Umbandists, Candomblé adepts, idealists, theists, and—as my friend Márcio suggested when I explained these categories to him—I suppose even French structuralists and American cultural anthropologists. "Spiritualist" is a more ecumenical term than "Spiritist," and it signaled one of Ulysséa's major differences from many of his fellow Spiritists.

In fact, Ulysséa was delighted to know that I was an anthropologist, and he made a special effort to take me to a

local home that the college had purchased with the goal of converting it some day to a "Para-Anthropology Center." Linked to the program of parapsychology that the college offered, the plan was that the Para-Anthropology Center would become a point of contact between the Spiritists of the college and the local mediums of Umbanda and Candomblé. Ulysséa explained that the Center would link the college to Umbanda and provide a source of "interchange" between the college and Umbandists. (Later, a student in the school explained to me that it would not, however, become an Umbanda center or place for Umbanda rituals, since the local Spiritist federation would "flip out.")

By coincidence, Ulysséa had scheduled a meeting with the local members of the Umbanda and Candomblé federation, and he graciously invited me to attend. Although my Portuguese was still rather rough at the time, I understood that the leaders of the Umbanda and Candomblé federation were somewhat skeptical of his proposal for a Para-Anthropology Center. They seemed not to like the implication of being studied in an anthropology center as if they were cultural artifacts. Ulysséa denied that his intent was anything of the sort. Somewhat concerned that my discipline was perceived as being appropriated by Spiritists to primitivize the Umbandists, I told them in my halting Portuguese that anthropologists do not study only Umbanda and the African-Brazilian religions, but that we study all religions, including Spiritism. I hoped that this comment would advance the dialogue between Spiritists and Umbandists.

Ulysséa went on to say that the purpose of the center was to provide a means of contact between Spiritists and Umbandists, a place where they could meet as equals and exchange ideas freely. He agreed with them that many Spiritists were extremely dogmatic, but he added that it was time to break down the barriers. I think they remained suspicious of the whole project, but they left quite politely. "At least we have made the first step," Ulysséa told me optimistically.

Ulysséa spent much time showing me the college and explaining its diverse programs, most of which were conven-

tional degrees in social work or other applied fields, but one of which was the brainchild of Doctor Hernani: the parapsychology program. Ulysséa was interested in my dissertation research, which he first thought might be parapsychological. When I explained that I was hoping to study the Spiritist movement and especially the work of the intellectuals, he switched into his sociological mode and asked me, "What are your hypotheses?"

I was somewhat taken aback. Anthropologists are not trained to hear that kind of question from their informants. I wanted to say that the method of an ethnographer is like that of a literary critic or a historian: you have to read the text or the documents before you can formulate an interpretation. We don't *do* hypotheses. Then, I thought of what Professor Camargo had said about anthropologists, and I remembered that Ulysséa, like Camargo, was a sociologist. His question was intimidating, and perhaps all the more so given the figure he cut: a tall man with a full white mane of hair who carried himself with an almost military sense of confidence and authority. I did not feel comfortable arguing with him about whether or not my anthropological methods were pseudoscientific next to his sociological ones.

"Well, I'm still formulating the hypotheses," I answered, "but I think I will study aspects of the relations between Spiritists and the medical profession. When I was in Brasília, I went to the university library and found a whole series of legal cases against Spiritism."

"Those are not hypotheses yet," he told me, as I remember, almost in the tone of a faculty advisor. "Let me know when you have some hypotheses and how you intend to operationalize them." Then he suggested that I look in their college library, which was rich in just that material, and I spent the next day discovering pieces of the polemical exchanges that had taken place between Jesuits and Spiritist intellectuals. I was intrigued with how science, or the name of science, was being used to legitimate different social groups in the arena of "popular religion and healing." In my notebook, I jotted down two topics to study: 1) exchanges between skeptical

intellectuals (either Catholic or medical) and Spiritists; and 2) exchanges between "skeptical" Spiritists (intellectuals) and "credulous" Spiritists (evangelical Spiritists). The way that the boundary between science and pseudoscience, between skepticism and belief, could be drawn and redrawn intrigued me. That led me to some preliminary hypotheses, but I did not have the courage to show them to Ulysséa. In any case, his questions brought me a step closer to what eventually became the thesis I defended: that to understand the scientific thought of the Spiritist intellectuals, one has to situate it in the context of exchanges Spiritists have not only with each other and with other religious groups but also with other actors in the broader ideological arena, such as the state, the medical profession, and Jesuit parapsychologists.

My mind was still on my hypotheses when Ulysséa invited me to attend a Spiritist session in their center. After dinner, I went over to an A-frame building that looked like the campus chapel. The session was not remarkably different from other Spiritist sessions, although it contained less religious or evangelical rhetoric than the center in Campinas. I suppose that was to be expected for a center in a university setting. The most outstanding event was that when the mediums were giving passes and my term came, the medium stopped in the middle and backed off.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Do I have an obsessing spirit attached to me?"

"No, you are a very strong physical effects medium," he said. "Has anyone ever told you that?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, you are. You should consider developing your mediumship."

I was somewhat impressed with the revelation. I remembered that when I was a child I had a secret position that I got into, and I would focus all my attention on an unlikely event that I wanted to happen. When the method worked a few times, I got scared and stopped. Of course, as an adult I had come to think of the events as the result of coincidence. The medium's comment made me wonder a little, until I told the

anecdote to my friend Patric, who said he had been to centers where they had said the same thing to him. Perhaps it was a kind of recruitment device.

SÃO PAULO

When I examined the books in the library of the Spiritist college, I kept coming across the name of a Padre Oscar González Quevedo. I first heard his name at a party in June, when I met a young Catholic activist—a tall, blue-eyed descendant of German immigrants—who had been working in an Ecclesial Base Community in southern Brazil. The Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) are grassroots organizations within the Catholic church, and they have been the topic of a tremendous amount of interest. Their emphasis on a congregational type of organization and on leadership directly from the people rather than from the Church hierarchy seems to be a strange combination of sixteenth-century Protestantism and twentieth-century socialism. The CEBs can range from a small Bible study group, generally led by a layperson or a nun, to a bona fide activist organization that has direct links with local progressive political groups such as the Worker's party (PT).

The German descendant with whom I chatted told me about his attempts to politicize the descendants of German peasants who lived in a small rural town in the state of Santa Catarina, which has the highest concentration of German descendants in the country. He described the work as very difficult, even for someone like him who had grown up in the region and knew the people. But it was also very rewarding. "Imagine," he said. "Peasants! They are very nice, but they have no understanding of the revolution."

When I heard him say the word *revolution* in Portuguese, it had a different ring than the facile way I had heard it thrown about among American New Left circles. I realized that I was talking with the first real revolutionary I had ever met. (I do not count the young Sparts who in the 1970s often interrupted the college meetings of the New American Movement and other radical groups.) I liked him. I listened to him talk

for a while about peasants and workers, revolution and socialism, and, of course, imperialism.

"You must think of me as the enemy," I said.

"Why?"

"Since I am an American, and my country is the imperialist aggressor," I answered with a wry smile.

"No, not at all. I don't think every American I meet is a spy. I realize there are good people in your country working to change it. We need good Americans who can help us to understand what goes on inside Washington, since it has so much impact on us."

I then told him about how I had worked for various leftist political groups when I lived in California, but how with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 there seemed to be little hope in my country for even progressive politics, let alone significant change, except at the local level or in piecemeal changes. We talked about the "North American reality" for a while, then we moved on to my research project.

He commented, "The Spiritists are generally very reactionary, but it would be good to have a solid social scientific study of their ideology. By the way, you should talk to Padre Quevedo. I don't know if you'll like him, and I'm not even sure I like him myself, but you should talk to him."

"Why don't you like him?"

"He uses parapsychology to combat Spiritism. I think political critique would be more effective."

Shortly after the party, I took the bus out to visit Padre Quevedo at the Latin American Center of Parapsychology (CLAP, as it was called) of the Faculdades Anchieta. It was a Jesuit college located on the outskirts of São Paulo on the road to campinas.

In Europe and in North America, academic parapsychology is largely the province of a small group of physicists and psychologists who hold posts in universities or private research laboratories, pursue experiments on extrasensory perception or psychokinesis, and have no hidden religious agenda. Some are religious, but generally they do not let their religious views interfere with their research and theories. In contrast, in

Brazil during the 1980s the term *parapsychology* was largely synonymous with the work of Padre Quevedo and others in the Catholic church, principally Jesuits. Quevedo followed closely the experimental line of American and European parapsychology. However, he also drew on the older field known as psychical research but only those studies that suggested any ostensible paranormal powers of mediums can be explained as unconscious extrasensory perception or psychokinesis rather than as the intervention of spirits. He roundly rejected the other tradition of psychical research, those studies that suggest there may in fact be some kind of survival of the soul after death. Of course, the material Quevedo rejected in psychical research was exactly what the Spiritists embraced and translated into Portuguese. Thus, both Jesuits and Spiritists were able to speak in the name of science—either parapsychology or one version of psychical research—but they did so by polarizing northern hemisphere schools along Brazilian religious lines (see Hess 1987a, 1987c, 1989b; Quevedo 1964, 1974). In the 1980s parapsychology and psychical research in Brazil was largely polarized into groups aligned with either the Jesuit or Spiritist viewpoint, although there were some groups and individuals who did not fall into either camp. For example, I have recently come across the work of Wellington Zangari of the Instituto de Investigações Científicas em Parapsicologia (the Institute of Scientific Investigations in Parapsychology), ECLIPSY, a Paulista group that has been critical of both Spiritist and Jesuit approaches to parapsychology.

When I arrived at the Jesuit college known as Faculdades Anchieta, I encountered a collegiate ghost town: almost no one was there and, as Padre Quevedo later told me, only CLAP remained open. I never found out if the closing was due to Church politics or the deepening economic crisis, but when I returned to São Paulo in 1985 to reestablish connections with Padre Quevedo, I learned that CLAP had closed and the distinguished padre had become a bus driver for a Catholic high school in downtown São Paulo. He was also under prohibition from his superiors to give classes, grant interviews, publish, or lecture. According to an article in the

Brazilian newsweekly *Veja* (October 26, 1986, p. 85), Quevedo had scandalized his superiors with his book *Before the Devils Return* (1982). In it he argued that all cases of possession, both biblical and postbiblical, had nothing to do with the supernatural and could be easily explained by parapsychology. The church officials removed the book from circulation and, as the Bishop of Barcelona had done a century earlier with Kardec's *Book of the Spirits*, burned all available copies. When I talked with Quevedo's superior in 1985, he said that the prohibition on Quevedo would not change the Church's acceptance of parapsychology; I am sure that as an ideological weapon against Spiritism, the controversial science was too valuable to give up so easily. Although Quevedo may have gone too far for his superiors, the interpretation of parapsychology he forged—minus his excesses—continued to be in effect in Brazil.

As a result of these Church politics, my only encounter with Padre Quevedo was this brief introduction in 1983. I had to wait a long time to see him, but finally, after lunch, I was allowed to meet with him. I am not sure if he was already under prohibition to speak at this time, but since I was speaking to him as a colleague and not interviewing him, the prohibition would not have applied. A slightly balding man in his mid-fifties, he talked with the energy and conviction of a man half his age. He was a native of Spain who had resided in Brazil for twenty-six years, yet he still spoke Portuguese with a thick Spanish accent, and undoubtedly his flair for polemic would have made more sense in Europe than in the hail-fellow-well-met environment that Brazilians sometimes describe as "everything's cool" (*tudo-bemismo*). He talked for a while about himself and how he had educated a generation—both clergy and laity, and not just from Brazil, but from all over Latin America—in the science of parapsychology, which to him shines like a white beacon in the dark night of Latin American superstition.

When he found out that I was an anthropologist who intended to study Spiritism, he said, "This is important. We

have studies of Umbanda here by parapsychologists on our faculty."

"No, I mean Kardecian Spiritism," I corrected.

"Ah, that is more interesting." He agreed that anthropologists should also study "Kardecism," and I immediately realized that my status as an "anthropologist" who was studying "Spiritism" could play into the Catholic church's goal to lump Spiritism together with Umbanda and the African religions as all one big grab bag of "primitive" or "folkloric superstition." To the point, Quevedo was curious about how the Spiritists would react to having an anthropologist study them.

"I don't know," I answered, "but I have a very good initial contact, through Doctor Hernani."

"Oh!" he said, throwing up his hands. "He is a fanatic!"

"He is very smart," Doctor Hernani told me when I met with him again and told him about my meeting with Padre Quevedo. "It's a shame that he is such a fanatic."

"That's funny," I said. "He used the same word to describe you."

Doctor Hernani smiled and talked for a while about Padre Quevedo, then we moved on to the topic of another critic of Spiritism. Dr. Osmard Andrade Faria was a medical doctor and author of a textbook on medical hypnosis (1979) and two books on parapsychology (1981, 1984). Although Faria was a materialist and therefore philosophically opposed to Spiritism, Doctor Hernani found him less dogmatic than Quevedo, and I came away with the same impression after an interview with the medical hypnotist two years later at his home in Florianópolis. The Spiritists in Curitiba had even decided to use Faria's textbook of parapsychology for their courses in their parapsychology program.

Quevedo and the Jesuit parapsychologists were, however, another matter. They attacked Spiritists in a way that reminded me of how back home the Amazing Randi and other "skeptics" who belonged to the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) attacked parapsychologists. But here was a key difference: in the United

States the skeptics attacked parapsychology as part of the whole environment of pseudoscience and superstition, whereas in Brazil Jesuit parapsychologists attacked Spiritists. In the United States parapsychologists rarely attacked Spiritualists or channelers, although they looked down their noses at them, and in Brazil there was at this time no equivalent of CSICOP. In short, the same scientific discourse—parapsychology—was under fire in the United States from skeptics for being too credulous (a pseudoscience) and in Brazil from Spiritists for being too skeptical. As parapsychology had passed from the relatively skeptical North American and Western European cultures to the relatively mystical Brazilian culture, it had shifted from being the debunked to the debunker.

As usual, Doctor Hernani summarized his own approach to skepticism in the form of a delightful anecdote, and I end the first part of my narrative with his story of Lamarkian evolution. He showed me Ken Keyes's *The Hundredth Monkey*, a book that I later learned the anthropologist Loring Danforth had also encountered in his ethnography of New Age firewalkers in the United States (1989:284). "Have you seen it before?" Doctor Hernani asked me.

"No," I answered.

"Let me tell you the story," this gifted storyteller began. Rather than rely on memory, I rely on a version of the story that Doctor Hernani related in the December, 1982, issue of the *Folha Espírita*, in an article written under one of his pen names, Lawrence Blacksmith. (Doctor Hernani gave me permission to reveal the pen name; he sometimes published under a pen name when he wrote articles in the Spiritist newspapers.) The story begins with a group of Japanese scientists who studied the Fuscata monkeys, a species found in island jungles off the coast of Japan. There were several colonies of monkeys on different islands, but the scientists did not allow communication among the colonies. In 1952 on the island of Koshima, scientists introduced sweet potatoes mixed with gravel and sand, and one monkey, the eighteen-month-old Imo, developed a way of washing the food. Imo's mother and

friends learned the trick quickly thereafter, and soon all the young monkeys on the island had learned to wash their food. However, the adult monkeys learned much more slowly, since they only learned to wash their food if they learned to do so from their own children. By 1958 almost all monkeys were washing their food, and the claim is that the other monkey colonies on the mainland, in Taksakiyama, also started to wash their sweet potatoes, without any apparent communication from the colony on Koshima. Although there are many different versions and explanations of the story (for a skeptic's account, see Amundson 1985), some have held that when a critical mass in a species—the "hundredth monkey"—acquires a new cultural innovation, then the innovation passes mysteriously to the entire species.

Doctor Hernani explains the significance of the hundredth monkey phenomenon for Spiritism in the following way:

> In fact, this contagion really appears to occur, especially in our civilization, due to the facility of communication, which rapidly creates the "critical mass" capable of bringing about a dialectical leap similar to the "phenomenon of the hundredth monkey." It is possible that the indiscriminate acceptance of mechanistic and physiological hypotheses still dominant in psychology was, in great measure, due to this phenomenon. There is no other explanation for it, since it is clear and evident that many of these hypotheses are inconsistent with the observation of the most prominent facts of the human psyche.

Doctor Hernani reviews Auguste Comte's stages of evolutionary development, switches to developments in parapsychology, and ends with a discussion of the electronic voice device that he had described to me on our first visit. He concludes as follows:

> The development and the diffusion of these ideas and research will certainly create a new "critical mass" that will provoke another dialectical leap similar to what occurred in the picturesque episode of the "hundredth monkey." And what will be the consequences of this?
>
> THE REBIRTH OF THE SOUL. Using a rhetorical figure, we could say—in reference to the total diffusion and acceptance of the

facts of the category of *psi theta* [paranormal phenomena suggestive of life after death]—that when the *hundredth monkey learns to wash its potatoes*, we will be witnessing the *rebirth of the soul.*

Another consequence of this "cultural innovation" will be the total recognition by science of the postulates of Spiritism, which was until now marginalized because of the distorted perspective created by the positivist, materialist, and mechanistic position still predominant among orthodox scientists.

Through this "series"—[the article was the eleventh and final one in a series called "The Mind Moves Matter"] and here we conclude—we hope to have attained our goal, which was to lead the reader, in a rapid excursion, through the length of the trajectory that Western thought has made in *search of the soul.*

(Andrade 1982)

And with the story of the hundredth monkey, I end the first part of my account of my trajectory in search of Brazilian Spiritism.

1984–1986:

RITUALS AND IDEOLOGIES

ARRIVAL: A FEW GLASSES OF RUM

Márcio greeted me in the Rio airport with a big Brazilian bear hug (*abraço*) when I arrived in September 1984. "You have arrived on a very auspicious day," he said.

"I have?"

"Yes. A good guy has also arrived at the same time."

"Who?"

"Leonardo Boff."

"Really? He's here in the airport?"

"Yes. He just got in from Rome. The Pope is threatening to silence him. Have you heard about it?" he asked as we began walking down the corridor.

"Yes, it was in the papers back home. Do you want to go listen to him?"

"Sure, if you're not too tired," he answered.

"Of course not. I'd love to."

So we headed down the corridor to the place where Boff was standing in the bright light of the television cameras. It was difficult for me to catch everything that the renegade

Franciscan priest was saying, but from what Márcio later told me this great leader of the theology of liberation was downplaying his differences with Rome. From later reports I learned that Boff had argued before the Pope that the Vatican should consult the people who are directly engaged in the struggle against poverty, rather than rely on European theologians who do not have hands-on experience in the struggle. Boff told the reporters that he was confident that the Pope would not silence him. History would show how wrong he was.

Boff was the student of Boaventura Kloppenburg, a conservative theologian in Brazil who was an ardent foe not only of Spiritism and Umbanda but also of the theology of liberation. (For his position on Spiritism and Umbanda, see Kloppenburg 1960, 1961, and 1967.) When in 1981 Boff first published a summary of his dissertation as a chapter in *Church, Charism, Power*, Kloppenburg reviewed it and charged his student with heresy (for the English translation, see Boff 1985). In what can only be the worst nightmare for any victim of dissertation neurosis, another of Boff's former teachers, Joseph Ratzinger, decided that his first teacher was right to charge their student with heresy. Boff soon had orders to appear before the Pope, and several months after the renegade theologian's visit to Rome in September, he received the orders of "silence." The orders, however, were soon clarified so that the curtain of silence was not completely closed: Boff could not give public lectures or publish his work, but he could continue to teach his seminary classes and to preach.

"He's going to be very popular now," Márcio said to me as we watched the theologian field questions, and his comment was indeed prophetic. The papal audience, and later the ruling of silence, served only to martyr the theologian and transform him into a popular hero. As the *Century* editor Robert Brown wrote, the decision to allow Boff to continue preaching "suggests that the Vatican has yet to come to terms with the power of the sermon," and the martyred leader was "soon receiving countless invitations to offer 'homilies' at Catholic

liturgical gatherings" (Brown 1986). In the long run, the Pope could not have chosen a better way to further Boff's career.

From the airport, Márcio took me directly to one of his favorite places, the Beach of Itaipu, which was located north of Niterói. *Ita* is Tupi for "rock." As in the United States, in Brazil the names used for rivers, beaches, lakes, and other natural phenomena are one of the few ways that the voices of the Native American civilizations are heard in the everday urban life. It was a cold morning and the beach was fairly deserted, but the bar was open, and we had a couple of *caipirinhas*—a strong drink of lime, ice, sugar, and rum (*cachaça*)—to get my trip to Brazil off to a good start. Dana was back in the United States, where she had moved on to a better job at another university, so I was not going to see her on this trip, nor would she be in Brazil when I returned in 1988. Márcio was so friendly that I wondered whether or not she had given him directions to take good care of me, but I also found that Brazilians in general are very good hosts. Whatever the reason, Márcio adopted me as a brother and made me feel most welcome to the land "below the equator." The *caipirinhas* were great.

I enjoyed my next encounter with these more earthly Brazilian spirits when I went to a Brazilian birthday party held for one of Márcio's cousins. I was surprised and unprepared when Márcio finally came by the apartment—I was staying with Bill and Monique—at about 11:00 P.M. As I was to learn that night, Brazilian birthday parties are all-night affairs where one eats, drinks, dances, sings, sleeps, talks, and even, since this birthday party was a special one held by an upper-middle class family, opens the windows in the middle of the night to hear a serenade from a group of singers in the street below.

Among the people I met at the party was another foreigner, a Chilean, one of the many people from his country who had moved to Brazil after the coup in 1973. I had heard that when he had met another American, he had asked him, "Do you work for the CIA?" As I was to learn gradually, there were some students in the universities who were so anti-American

that they refused to meet me. I wanted to avoid getting off on the wrong foot with the Chilean, so I decided to beat him to the question.

"Ah, you are Chilean," I said. "It is embarrassing for an American to meet a Chilean, given what my country has done to yours." I was referring to the now well-documented role of the American government in the coup that resulted in the death of the democratically elected socialist President Salvador Allende and the demise of one of Latin America's most vibrant and stable democracies.

"If only all Americans were like you," he answered.

"How?"

"You are an American with a political consciousness," he said. We talked for a while about politics, and then we switched to what I was doing here in Brazil. When he found out that I was studying Spiritism, he said, "I know a Spiritist."

"Is he an Umbandist or really a Spiritist?"

"I think he's really a Spiritist. I don't know. Maybe a little of both. You'll have to meet him and see. He's a nice guy. You'll like him."

SPIRITIST SESSIONS

So on Monday I met Hercílio Costa, a shortish, handsome man about fifty years old who had a warm smile that immediately put me at ease. Hercílio's income came from his work as a dental prosthetics technician who occasionally gave classes at the local university. His real interest, however, was Spiritism, and it turned out that he knew almost all of the "houses of Spiritism" in Niterói. He was a kind of walking synthesis of the Brazilian religious scene: he had been through Silva Mind Control; one of his relatives had been active in the Rationalist sect of Spiritism; he and his family were baptized Catholics; other relatives were Presbyterians; he worked in a local Umbanda temple that was evolving toward Candomblé; he ran another Spiritist center that incorporated elements of Umbanda in its sessions; and he kept an "altar" of pyramids in a back room where he fulfilled the requests of

his clients. He was my Taxila, the name that Lévi-Strauss (1973) gave to an archeological site in Asia where a variety of Eastern and Western civilizations met. One could write an entire book about this man, and perhaps I will do so one day. Hercílio lived his life with a sense of humility but without the usual self-righteousness that accompanies deep religious faith, and I realized right away that, if nothing else, I could learn something about humility and compassion from him.

But Hercílio had much more to teach me. When he heard that I had come to study the Spiritism of Kardec, he told me that he knew of a very traditional center with very fine people, so one evening we were off to meet Coronel Cícero. "*Coronel*" is used in traditional, agrarian Brazil as a term of respect for the rural bosses, roughly equivalent to the kind of Kentucky colonel associated with Colonel Sanders of fried chicken fame, although quite a bit less genteel. However, Coronel Cícero was a real colonel; his title came from his military days when he had received training as a dentist. As he told me on the day of my first visit to his center, "The institute here is run by Coronel Cícero, which is to say myself. But inside I am only Cícero; the title 'coronel' is for the outside." This comment seemed to me one of the clearest expressions I heard in Brazil of the distinction between the worlds of house and street that DaMatta (1985) has discussed so carefully.

The Spiritist center was located on the grounds of an orphanage called Instituto Dr. March. Orphanages were just one of the ways in which Spiritists lived out their central maxim, "Without charity, there is no salvation." The center had a typical schedule. On Tuesday evenings, there was a "session" of mediumistic development. (Spiritists held "sessions," not "rituals," which, they explained to me, are held only in the Catholic Church, Umbanda, and other religions.) On Thursday afternoons, there was a session of charity, in which they gave away food and clothing to the poor. On Friday evenings, there was a session of disobsession. In my visits to the center, I was careful to attend each of the three meetings. The first that I attended was a session of development, which I will describe here in some detail to give a flavor of the center.

Before the session, I got in line to receive passes. People waited in a line along the back wall, and they entered the side chamber one-by-one. When my turn came, I stepped inside the room and sat on a chair. The medium, Joãozinho (joe-own-'zee-nhyoo), or "Johnny," was an old man who was the only member of visibly African descent in the center. He stood behind me and passed his hands over my head, arms, and torso while he told me to think about Jesus. Later, after everyone who wanted passes had received them, the session opened with a long prayer by Coronel Cícero's wife, Dona Nadir, who led the session, throughout which the music of Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, and Spanish classical guitarists played.

Coronel Cícero sat at the head of the table, while Dona Nadir sat at his right, with one person in between. The other mediums and mediums-in-development sat at the other positions around the table. Hercílio and I sat in the front row of the chairs that faced the table, and behind us sat two other "frequenters," as nonmembers were called. Joãozinho sat in the front row to the far left. No one else was present, at least not in the visible light spectrum.

The table had a white tablecloth on it, and before each person was a copy of Kardec's *The Book of the Spirits*. There were also some blank pieces of paper and pencils available for automatic writing or "psychography," but no one used them on this evening. After the prayer, Dona Nadir read a passage from Kardec's book, and the medium to her right gave an exegesis on the passage, which was about the three kingdoms of nature. The session proceeded with each of the mediums in turn reading one of the questions that Kardec had asked the spirits, and Dona Nadir reading the answers. Coronel Cícero asked after each of the readings if there were any questions or comments, but there were no responses. It was hardly a lively class, but perhaps the mediums were intimidated by their guests.

Then, one of the mediums turned off the lights, leaving the room dark except for a small, red overhead lamp. Dona Nadir received her spirit guide, who lectured for a while, after which

she got up, walked around the table and gave everyone passes. No one said very much, and I wondered if our presence was inhibiting a more natural interchange. One woman said something and started to act very upset; I could not understand what she was saying but she appeared to be receiving a perturbing or earthbound spirit. Dona Nadir calmed her down and made her put her hands back on the table, then she said a prayer and invited Hercílio to say one as well.

After the prayers, there was a silent period during which the mediums were invited to sleep if they were tired. Cícero got up from the table and lay down across several chairs in the back, fell asleep, and soon began to snore. Joãozinho also fell asleep, as did one of the mediums who had been yawning rather loudly throughout the session. Later, Dona Nadir woke everyone up by calling their names, although Coronel Cícero continued sleeping. She checked with each medium to make sure they were all right, then she turned on the fluorescent light. Joãozinho gave a final prayer, which had a very evangelical tone. The mediums handed in their books, paper, and pencils. Someone brought out a group of little plastic cups—the kind used to drink *cafezinhos*, or small cups of coffee—and a glass pitcher of water that had been spiritually treated with passes. Everyone got up and talked informally as each person drank a cup of water—although the one they gave to me had a hole in it and the water spurted out of the bottom. The server drank it and gave me another, which I drank, wondering silently if the water had been not only purified on the spiritual plane but also filtered on this one. I was already battling the worst diarrhea I have ever had in my life.

On another occasion, I attended a disobsession session at the center. Coronel Cícero and Dona Nadir were unable to attend, and in their absence the director of the center, Dona Ooka, ran the session. The passes and reading occurred much as before, except that the text was from Chico Xavier instead of Allan Kardec and the exegesis was very brief. After the lights were turned off, the mediums formed a chain of hands around the table. The frequenters who were seated in the rows of chairs then got up from their seats, and each one put

their hands on one of the medium's shoulders. Joãozinho sat at the table, and he received an earthbound spirit, as did a medium seated at the corner of the table, as well as Suzarinha, another medium seated at the table. Dona Ooka told the spirits that they were in "the house of Christ," and so on, and after some "indoctrination," as the Spiritists call it, the spirits went away enlightened. The work of indoctrination was aimed at enlightening the spirits rather than at healing the frequenters, a rather traditionally Kardecist approach that probably contributed to the somewhat poor attendance. The session ended with prayers and sharing of what I called "*aguazinhos*," the little cups of spiritually purified water.

I also attended a couple of their sessions of charity, including the monthly "campaign of the kilo," in which members and friends of the center each brought a bag filled with a kilo (usually more) of groceries. Once a month they gave away about forty bags of food to old women who lived in the nearby *favelas*, the word for shantytowns, which derives, ironically, from the name of a hillside flower. In contrast to the evidently European origin of the mostly middle-class Spiritists, most of the *favelados* were of African or mixed African and Native American descent, providing living testimony to the way Brazilian class divisions also correspond to racial divisions. They were the poorest people I have ever seen; they were in a completely different league of destitution from the poor of American urban ghettoes or even of the parts of rural Appalachia through which I have traveled. Some of them were blind, some were missing front teeth, and some had wounds covered by old bandages. Their eyes seemed tired or dull; they appeared to suffer mentally from their years of hard times.

Dona Nadir led the session and handed out number tags to the frequenters, who knew they were to hold on to their tags in order to exchange them for the bags of food at the end of the session. She then introduced me to the *favelados*, and everyone clapped for this *americano* who had come to study *espiritismo*. We sang happy birthday to one of the *favelados*, and then Dona Nadir read an evangelical passage from *Chris-*

tian Agenda, a book by the spirit André Luiz and psychographed by the medium Chico Xavier. The passage focused on the virtues of self-abnegation and patience.

I was reminded at this point of Roger Bastide, the French sociologist whom Professor Camargo said he missed. In an article that Bastide published toward the end of his life, he had written the following:

> A certain image of the ideal self, which returns like a leitmotiv, is the fruit of a Spiritist education, of its lectures, its sermons; but it is also equally clear that it corresponds to the traditional Brazilian mentality, of the fraternal type, and that it gives first place to the virtues of charity, and not justice. Spiritism does not break with Catholic morality; it continues it, but in doing so it pulverizes it in a series of practical counsels: don't eat more than necessary, give away the remainder of your food, be humble, respond with love to other offenses, free yourself from anger and pride, etc. What happens to Brazilian Spiritists, when they are converted [from Catholicism], is that far from abandoning the teachings that they have received as children, they put into practice what Catholics preach but quite frequently fail to translate into action (1967:14).

Bastide's interpretation of Spiritism was part of his critique of bourgeois religious morality, in which he aligned Marxist sociology with an African-Brazilian religious perspective to take a hard, critical look at the religions of the elites and the middle classes. Some might charge Bastide with ethnocentrism (from the perspective of Yoruba Candomblé), but at least his sociology openly stated his views, took Spiritists seriously enough to criticize them, and made it possible to engage them in a dialogue.

In any case, I seemed to be hearing the voice of Bastide's spirit as I listened to Dona Nadir read from *Christian Agenda*. As I watched the Spiritists give a lecture on Christian self-abnegation to these people, I wondered what would happen if the Spiritist movement had a Leonardo Boff and its own theology of liberation. When I floated the idea over the months that followed, I found that many younger Spiritists welcomed the idea of a Spiritism of liberation, and they complained

about the reactionary values of their elders. Those who liked the idea were generally Brazilians of my generation, those who had grown up during the twenty-one years of military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985. (More than once, when I said twenty years, I would be corrected: "Don't forget *even* one year.") However, when I suggested the idea of a Spiritism of liberation to older Spiritists, they often shrugged their shoulders and, on more than one occasion, said to me, "Spiritism is already a liberation." The phrase reminded me of the statement of Boff's (and the Spiritists') nemesis, Boaventura Kloppenburg, who once said, "My theology of liberation is to liberate people from sins" (*Veja*, July 21, 1982).

However, while social justice is an important goal, the immediate problem is that one's neighbors are going hungry, and the "campaign of the kilo" that I found at this Spiritist center was certainly among the most noble of the many charitable activities I found in the Spiritist movement. Dona Nadir finished reading from *Christian Agenda*, and the *favelados*, whose attention had wandered during the reading, now stood up as she said a closing prayer. I then helped her give the bags to the people, including one that I had purchased and brought along as my contribution. Each bag had two loaves of bread, potatoes, beans, rice, sugar, etc. They also gave away one liter of milk, which in Brazil comes in small plastic bags that usually leak and go sour quickly. Coronel Cícero kept a record of the transactions, and as the people left, some of them asked for bus fare, which we gave to them as well.

AFRICAN-LINE UMBANDA

Having described an example of a fairly "orthodox" or typical Spiritist center, and having provided a taste of Umbanda and Candomblé, I will now begin the difficult task of showing some of the more complex distinctions within and among the spirit mediumship religions. As Professor Camargo argued, Umbanda might be best thought of as a continuum from a relatively Spiritist pole to another pole that is closer to Can-

domblé, with each Umbanda group different from the next one. Yet, as the anthropologist Diana Brown has argued (1986), the great variety of Umbandists can be categorized as belonging, more or less, either to a Spiritist or an African line or tendency. If they have a Spiritist orientation, the groups are likely to be called "centers," whereas if they have an African orientation, they are likely to be called *terreiros* (temples). One day Hercílio invited me to go to "a *terreiro* of Umbanda" run by his friend Altamira, and soon I was to see a good example of a temple that was moving toward African-line Umbanda.

In the morning the members of this temple were preparing for the visit of a Catholic priest, who was coming to give his annual mass. The mass was part of the post-Vatican II attitude of the Catholic church, which has attempted to become more flexible in adapting itself to the different religious traditions of the world. The members of the temple had set up an altar table in front of the altar along the front wall for the *orixás*, and I watched as they laid out a red carpet for the priest and drew the curtain on the image of Oxum—the *orixá* of fresh waters and beauty, who is syncretized with the Virgin Mary—that was located beneath the altar. They put some of the other statues of the *orixás* beneath the front altar as well, and they set up chairs in the open area where the dancing usually took place. By the time they were done, the temple looked like a rustic Catholic chapel.

When the priest arrived, everyone was very nice to him and he and Altamira seemed to be very friendly with each other. The people of the temple all joined in when the priest sang Catholic songs, and everyone seemed to know the prayers and rituals of the mass. Apparently many of them were familiar with Catholic masses if they were not actually practicing Catholics. During the mass the priest said he agreed with Kardec's saying, "Without charity, there is no salvation." He said he had read Kardec and there was much value in the Spiritist doctrine. The priest went on to note that even his mother, before she died, had shown "Spiritist tendencies" (an ambiguous phrase that echoes with other, less desirable "tendencies"). However, the priest also talked about the dan-

gers of conjuring up spirits and about the necessity of exorcism. Thus, although he seemed to be practicing the more ecumenical stance of the Catholic church's post-Vatican II policies, he still drew a line that marked a fundamental boundary between Catholicism and Spiritism when he pointed out that "necromancy"—or "mediumship," depending whose side one was on—was still unacceptable within the Catholic Church.

After the priest and his two altar boys left, we all went outside where we ate meat and cheese pastries (*salgadinhos*) and drank Coke. No one criticized the priest, at least not to me, and since most of the people in this session were not Spiritists and did not read Kardec, his comments seemed to indicate that the priest had little understanding of the major differences among the spirit mediumship religions. For him, the different groups appeared as an undifferentiated conglomerate that he labeled "Spiritism." Furthermore, his comment against conjuring up spirits was an expression of the main obstacle that still stood between the church's present position and a truly ecumenical approach on the church's part. Despite the increased openness to the exotic aspects of non-Catholic rituals, the Catholic church still did not tolerate communication with the dead or the doctrine of reincarnation. Still, the mediums of this temple tolerated the priest's visit, and they insisted that it was important to maintain good ties with the Catholic church. In addition to ecumenical motives, several of the mediums were old enough to remember the dictatorship of the 1930s and 1940s, when the close relationship between Cardinal Leme and the dictator Getúlio Vargas led to widespread police repression of all of the spirit mediumship religions, from the most African of the Candomblé *terreiros* to the most European of the Spiritist centers.

After we finished our snacks, we went back inside the building, where the mediums rolled up the carpet, put away the chairs, moved the altar table off to the side, opened the curtains beneath the altar of the *orixás*, unveiled the image of Oxum, and brought the statues of the *orixás* up to the top of the altar for all to see. They then started up a session dedi-

cated to the *caboclos*, the cigar-smoking and hand-whooping spirits of Native Americans, with the mediums dressed in white. (Hercílio later told me that "white shoes" was the nickname for this type of Umbanda.) Altamira did not receive a spirit, but all the other mediums did, including Hercílio. I sat off to the side in a row of chairs with three of Hercílio's children, and at one point a man sitting next to us "flipped out" and ran out of the center. Altamira ran out and got him, brought him back, and made him kneel at the altar. They took some water from below the altar, where the statue of Oxum was located, and sprinkled it on the man. He seemed better, but still shaken up. Hercílio later told me that the man had been possessed by a *caboclo* spirit.

After the mass, Hercílio showed me around the grounds. I had already seen a small house for Exu (the trickster spirit) and the *caboclos* as well as an open-air clearing dedicated to Oxum and located next to the waterfall, which is her special domain. We had also passed by a metal post on which hung a dead dove that had been sacrificed. Now Hercílio took me to another section of the grounds beyond the temple. Here, he lit a candle to the *caboclos*, and his daughters Flávia and Glaúcia also lit one candle each, much as one does in the Catholic church for the saints. Later, Hercílio's son, William, showed me yet another section of the grounds that lay beyond the house for changing clothes. This section had yet another open-air clearing, but unlike the other one it also had a series of cages for sacrificial chickens and doves—and an area where sacrificial geese and a goat wandered around.

During the afternoon, another session took place, first in the open-air grounds for Oxum and later in the house of Exu. I was not allowed to attend, and Hercílio said even some of the mediums were not invited. They had to do some "heavy work" that involved "disobsession for Exu," which I understood to be a polite way of saying that they were doing countersorcery. I saw people walking to the house of Exu with two chickens, and I presume they were sacrificed. Later, I peeked inside the building and saw that it was full of sacrificed white chickens, bottles of rum, and plates of a corn-meal mixture,

all offerings for Exu. If I had decided to spend more time at the temple, they might have eventually invited me to attend the sessions; however, because I was more interested in Spiritism, I did not develop the possibility.

Altamira invited me back for the *saída do santo* (the saint's coming-out) ceremony that was to be held in a few weeks, and when the time came I returned with Hercílio. Altamira was probably in his sixties, but he was now becoming the "son" of a younger, Bahian man who was a father-of-the-saints in a Candomblé in Rio. (In the very orthodox Candomblés of Bahia, this role is reserved for women, but things are more flexible in the south, as they are in the so-called *caboclo* Candomblés of the northeast.)

The rites of the saint's coming-out ceremony began around noon and lasted until six-thirty that evening. In the first rite, held inside the temple, Altamira was dressed all in white, and his head was shaved. The rite marked the beginning of a period of ninety days of seclusion and silence that he had promised to undergo. During this rite, the mediums danced in a big circle and received their spirits.

Later, we moved outside, where there was a terrible smell from all the animals and food that had been left out as a sacrifice on the hill above the temple. Altamira soon reappeared, this time with a bowl of fire resting on a white turban that he wore on his head. He was dressed in the reddish pyjamas of Xangô, the *orixá* of thunder and justice who in this region is sometimes associated with St. Jerome. With the bowl of fire balanced on his head, Altamira followed the thin, effeminate Bahian, who wore white pants and a white turban with a green shirt, and they walked very slowly up to and around a tree. In traditional West African religion, trees are often closely associated with spirits. The tree was tied with three ribbons—two white and, above them, a red one, the colors of Xangô. Next to the tree was a post about the height of a person, which was planted in the ground and wrapped in white towels. The mediums stood off to the side and clapped. They were all dressed in white except for their necklaces, which were the colors of their *orixás*.

Hercílio explained that all people have two *orixás* in their heads, a father and a mother, which makes each of us the "son" or "daughter" of two of the *orixás*. I have sometimes heard people who say we have three *orixás*, and in addition to the *orixás* it is also possible to have other spirit guides. Because each of the *orixás* has a distinct personality as well as a history of relations with the other *orixás* (sometimes acrimonious, sometimes amorous, and often both), it is possible to develop a psychology of interpersonal relationships by reference to the *orixás*. We might say that some people are fighters because they have Ogum in their heads, or that so-and-so does not get along with someone else because her Ogum fights with his Iansã. (For one version of the *orixá* stories in English, see González Wippler 1985.)

After Altamira finished his marches outside the temple, we all returned inside and waited until he came out from a dressing room. This time he was dressed in a silken, rose-colored tunic with a red sash tied in the back. He bore a brass crown on his head, and on his arms he wore brass arm-bands studded with red stones. In his hands he carried two axes, symbols of Xangô. He paraded around the room and then sat on a giant wicker chair that symbolized Xangô's throne.

Hercílio explained to me that this ceremony was part of the "nation," which was different from the "white shoes" session I had seen on the previous visit. Although Altamira's temple had started off as a "white shoes" Umbanda temple, in recent years it had been evolving toward the "nation," which was closer to the Yoruba Candomblé. I got the sense that competition from another temple was bringing some of these changes to Altamira's house, and that the move toward Candomblé was bringing more prestige to his temple. Hercílio seemed somewhat uncomfortable with some of these changes, but he and Altamira had been friends for decades and he would not let these innovations come between them. In any case, the more general point is that when Umbanda temples change and develop over time, the direction of this change is not, as many Spiritists hold and some sociologists have also believed, always from the African-line toward Spiritism.

Rather, I think the changes depend very much on the tastes of one's clients, on the evolution of the neighborhood, and the general toleration of the police for African-style rituals. In short, the world is not always becoming a more Westernized place.

MORE SPIRITIST SESSIONS

Having now given an example of some of the variety within Umbanda, I will turn to another Spiritist center to provide a sense of the variations among Spiritist groups as well. One evening Hercílio took me to meet Poubel, who lived in one of the highrises along the beach of one of Niterói's most fashionable neighborhoods. Poubel was a middle-aged man, a robust talker who seemed to combine an evangelical spirit with an entrepreneurial one in a way that reminded me of some American ministers. His daytime profession was a radio announcer, and he certainly had the skills of monologue that the occupation requires, for he had no trouble coming up with things to say as he spoke—or, as Spiritists say, "indoctrinated" us—for about three hours.

As I listened to him talk about religion, I pondered some of the contradictions of Spiritism. His maid, a young, slender, white woman dressed in a very short black miniskirt, came in and served us *cafezinhos*. She came and went quickly, without saying a word, and I remember thinking that many middle-class, North American Protestants would recoil at the idea of having a domestic servant in the home, and would certainly not tolerate one dressed in such memorably unpuritanical clothing. Another apparent contradiction, at least to my American mind, between the sacred and the profane was the delicate balance that Poubel maintained between his respect for scientific knowledge and his evangelical zeal.

Among Poubel's words of wisdom, he told me I had a special mission to return to the United States and spread the gospel of Spiritism in my country. "I met an American medium who was ignorant of Kardec," he told me, "and that's the problem in your country. American Spiritualism is faltering

because it lacks Spiritist doctrine." In other words, American Spiritualists lacked the solid intellectual, philosophical, and scientific basis that Kardec's doctrine provided. "To accept Jesus in your heart—as Protestants, some Umbandists, and American Spiritualists do—is not enough. You must also study. But you must not go too far the other way, which is the mistake of orthodox medicine and parapsychology, where the head dominates the heart. Only the study of Spiritist doctrine can bring the proper balance."

Among the aspects of Spiritist doctrine on which Poubel expounded, he told me that Jesus materialized on earth and that he did not have a material body. By this time I had studied enough Spiritist doctrine to know that this rather unusual belief was a marker of one of the controversial factions within the Spiritist movement. During a moment when Poubel stopped talking to take a breath, I managed to ask, "Are you, sir, a Roustaingist?"

"Ah!" he answered, smiling. "You are already deeply into things here, aren't you?"

I was referring to the Spiritist Jean-Baptiste Roustaing, a contemporary of Kardec from southern France who had brought about the first schism in the Spiritist movement not long after Kardec had launched the movement in the middle of the nineteenth century. The major point of disagreement was a very obscure debate over what is known in theological circles as the "docetic doctrine": the idea that the body of Jesus was nonmaterial. At stake in this rather arcane debate was the important question of whether Spiritism was a Christian religion or, as Kardec had held, a philosophy with a Christian moral basis. Kardec held that Jesus had a material body and was the "son of God" in the same sense that we all are sons and daughters of God (although Kardec was willing to grant Jesus a privileged position among us). Roustaing, in contrast, had a much more Christian orientation, and his works even included new versions of the gospels that were revised via Spiritist mediums. Roustaing's ideas had little influence in France, but they were picked up by some of the more evangelical Spiritists in late nineteenth-century Rio.

Those Spiritists in turn have controlled the Brazilian Spiritist Federation, which is headquartered in Rio, since at least the turn of the century. I found little support for Roustaing outside the Brazilian Spiritist Federation and some pockets here and there (mainly in the area around Rio de Janeiro), but the Federation controls the national federalizing body, the National Federative Council. As a result, Roustaing's ideas have an influence way out of proportion to the number of Roustaingists in the Spiritist movement. To borrow a metaphor from one, very anti-Roustaingist Spiritist from a rival Spiritist federation in Niterói, the Vatican is controlled by pretenders. The "orthodox Kardecians" saw the Roustaingists as crypto-Catholics, or Spiritists who had compromised Spiritism because they were unwilling to give up some of their cherished Catholic beliefs.

I sensed the influences of other religions, however, when Hercílio and his daughter Glaúcia accompanied me for the first time to Poubel's center. An air-conditioned suite of rooms on the second floor of a modern building, his center was equipped with the latest in high-tech equipment, including a VCR, a television monitor, a microphone, and loudspeakers. During some of the sessions, I watched Poubel use his skills as a radio announcer to manipulate the media technology in an effective way that reminded me a little of televangelist preachers. Another influence on Poubel's center may have come from the direction of Umbanda, for the whole style of healing was practical and client-oriented rather than doctrinal and spirit-oriented. The clients (the obsessed people) sat at the foot of the table with their hands on the tabletop, and the spirits seemed to flow out of them into the tabletop and then through the mediums' hands, which were also resting on the tabletop, into the mediums.

In one case, a woman client refused to sit down. Instead, she exhibited wild behavior, ran around the front of the room, and ended up standing on the chairs where the people received passes. Poubel's wife made awful animal noises when she received the spirit that was bothering the woman, and Hercílio later told me that it must have been one of the lower

spirits of Quimbanda. Sometimes those spirits are referred to as "elementals," or very nasty spirits that have never been incarnated before and are believed to be responsible for poltergeist attacks and other kinds of very serious and unwanted phenomena. The woman calmed down, and the session ended with a series of prayers, one of them from Poubel's spirit guide, a Spanish doctor who had been his brother in a past life.

SPIRIT SURGEONS

When I met with Poubel at his home, he told me that Dr. Edson Queiroz was planning to visit his center later in the month, and he invited me to attend the sessions of this famous medium. It was indeed a great opportunity, for Edson Queiroz incorporated the famous spirit of Doctor Fritz, a German surgeon who had died during World War I and subsequently decided to return to Brazil to perform medical services for the poor.

Doctor Fritz had first chosen as his instrument Arigó, a humble bartender and public functionary who had lived in the city of Congonhas, located in the state of Minas Gerais. I visited Congonhas in January, where, like many other tourists, I spent time admiring the statues of Jesus and the twelve biblical prophets carved by Aleijadinho (ah-lay-jah-'djee-nyoo), the famous sculptor who had a manual disability but had his friends tie a hammer and chisel to his hands in order for him to carve. But unlike most tourists, I was also curious about that other carver from Congonhas, the famous medium-surgeon. When I asked an attendant at a hotel if he remembered Arigó, he called in a boy who soon led me to the medium's family, so I was able to meet with his widow and children.

Arigó is said to have discovered his mediumship in 1950 when he operated on his friend Senator Lúcio Bittencourt and cured him of lung cancer. The medium soon became a nationally known healer, and thousands flocked to Congonhas to receive his surgical treatment or his clairvoyant prescriptions. His increasing fame led to investigations by the

Catholic church and the medical profession, and by 1956 Arigó was on trial for *curandeirismo*, a term that means "folk healing" but is often used in the sense of "quackery." (For biographical accounts, see Fuller 1974; Pires 1963, 1973; and Rizzini 1963. For a Catholic critique of *curandeirismo* as "quackery," see Quevedo 1978.)

As the legal scholar Djalma Barreto (1972) says, the Brazilian folk-healing law is a "true legislative curiosity," shared only with Peru and Argentina. While most countries find a prohibition against the "illegal practice of medicine" sufficient for the purposes of protecting the people from charlatans and the medical profession from unfair competition, the folk-healing law is a legal back-up device designed to put behind bars anyone who is caught doing the following: "1) Habitually prescribing, administering, or applying any substance; 2) using gestures, words, or any other means; 3) making diagnoses" (Delmanto 1981:293). As the reader will discern, such a definition could apply to almost any kind of religious healing, including prayers, passes, and even the priest's blessing, and indeed there are cases where, to the consternation of Spiritist mediums, even the innocuous spiritual pass has been prosecuted as folk healing. The penalty—detention from six months to two years—indicates that the state considers folk healing to be a serious offense.

Convicted of folk healing, Arigó was soon pardoned by President Kubitschek, a surgeon by profession and fellow Mineiro by origin. The Spiritist biographers claim that Arigó had cured one of the President's daughters of kidney stones, but I suspect that the move was also popular among Kubitschek's Mineiro electorate. After the charismatic and popular President left office in 1960, prosecutions began again, and in 1964 Arigó was again found guilty of folk healing—a point his widow emphasized to me during our visit. The charges were, however, dropped again, this time perhaps because of the outcries from some American researchers, who are said to have planned to start a hospital where they could study the wonder healer.

Arigó died in a car accident in 1971, and since then the

privilege (and burden) of receiving Doctor Fritz has passed to a line of other mediums, all of whom are said to have died in freakish accidents. The spirit's instrument during the 1980s was Edson Queiroz, who in 1991 also met with a violent and untimely death, thus continuing the legend around Dr. Fritz. A licensed medical doctor, Dr. Edson was a gynecologist from the northeast who, to the consternation of his fellow doctors, received the spirit of Doctor Fritz and performed minor surgical operations in Spiritist centers across the country. One of his stopping points was Poubel's center in Niterói.

I stopped by Poubel's center the week before Dr. Edson's visit in order to get a *ficha* to allow me to enter his center when Edson was there. When I arrived at his office door and Poubel saw me, he motioned me to have a seat in his office. I sat and watched as he doled out tickets to people who knocked timidly on his door and explained their problems.

"Most of these people have problems with their eyes, such as cataracts," he told me in between clients, "or with their spine. They have received medical attention, but it was to no avail."

The phone rang and he answered it. Poubel had two or three telephones, and I watched as he went from conversation to conversation like a busy entrepreneur. Soon he was calling doctors and inviting them to the session. I thought he had wanted to talk to me, but after an hour of waiting and listening I went to the secretary and got the ticket from her. Brazilians will hardly ever excuse themselves and say that they are busy; the guest is supposed to take the hint, and I probably seemed as dense to him as he seemed rude to me. As I left the room, an exasperated woman who had obviously been waiting to see Poubel for quite some time said to me, "This guy thinks he's a big shot (*pistolão*)!"

When I arrived the day that Edson Queiroz was in Poubel's center, I found that the *ficha* that I had was not enough to gain entry; I was told that I now needed not only a *ficha* but a *sena*. Like the poor character in the movie *Brazil*, I asked what a *sena* was, and the man behind the table just laughed. With the arrival of Dr. Edson, Poubel's center had become transformed

into a Brazilian bureaucracy, and I found myself among the throngs on the outside waiting to get in. What I needed was a red-tape cutter (*despachante*). It is hard to believe, but in Brazil the bureaucracy is so bad that a profession of red-tape cutters has developed, and there is even a ministry of "debureaucratization"—a bureaucracy to cut down on the bureaucracy. For a small fee, the *despachante* will navigate bureaucracies for their clients and grease all the appropriate palms. Fortunately, although I did not have a *despachante*, an American journalist who was close to Dr. Edson—Gary Dale Richman—had befriended me. He was already inside, and with his help I was able to gain entry. As Brazilians say, he gave me a *jeitinho* (jay-'tchee-nyoo), that is, he pulled a string. The name tag that I was given read "Dr. David Hess—M.D., U.S.A." It was a lie, but when in Rio . . .

Confused and frustrated but safely inside, I soon faced a new problem: boredom. I sat for hours in the main room of the center waiting for something to happen. Occasionally Poubel or one of the members of the center entered the room and gave an evangelical sermon via microphone and loudspeakers to the captive audience, and at other times they played videotapes of Dr. Edson doing psychic surgery, Chico Xavier doing automatic writing, or the medium Gasparetto doing mediumistic painting. Finally, after hours of waiting, Dr. Edson appeared and gave a short talk. The dozens of potential patients perked up their attention. After Dr. Edson finished giving his lesson about how science should recognize the spiritual, he left, and, after another wait of perhaps an hour, he reappeared, this time as Dr. Fritz. His face looked contorted and somewhat puffy. I asked Gary later if Edson gave himself injections to make his face swollen, but he said he was sure the doctor did not.

Dr. Fritz then walked around the room and selected his potential patients. A "random" process allowed Poubel to select the "doctors" who would be allowed to witness the operations, which took place in Poubel's office, a room located off to the side of the main lecture hall and now converted into an operating room. Fortunately, I—who, according to my

name tag was an American doctor but according to Poubel in one of his lectures was a parapsychologist from New York (apparently more prestigious than being either a medical doctor or an anthropologist)—was among the chosen few. Inside Poubel's office, I witnessed four operations: a woman with a breast cyst, a man with a back cyst, a woman with a back cyst, and a woman with an unspecified back problem. In the first three operations, Dr. Fritz cut into the skin with a surgical scalpel and removed the cyst in what appeared to be a conventional operation. There was no sleight of hand as is often the case with the Filipino "psychic surgeons"; Dr. Fritz simply used a scalpel and executed a relatively routine surgical operation. His fourth patient had complained of a back pain rather than a cyst, and in this operation the doctor-medium stuck a knife in the nape of her neck above the spine, then he proceeded to twist it around. He explained to us that there were specific points on the spiritual body on which he could operate, and these invisible points should not be confused with acupuncture points. (See Greenfield 1987 for a discussion of this issue and a more general background to Dr. Edson's work.)

When I was a college student, I had an operation to remove a lipoma, that is, a benign fatty tumor or cyst similar to what I saw Dr. Fritz remove from the first three patients. According to my doctor, one can usually leave a lipoma untouched, because it generally does not become malignant. As long as the fatty tissue is not in a position where it will be rubbed, it will not grow. However, lipomas tend to grow if they are in a place on the body where they are rubbed, and they can grow to the size of grapefruits or even larger. Because one of my lipomas was on my forearm and subject to constant rubbing and discomfort from the books I carried, I had it removed. The minor operation only required local anesthesia and a few stitches.

Dr. Fritz's procedure was similar to the one I had experienced with my doctor back home. The only difference was that Dr. Fritz claimed that he did not use anesthesia. As he operated, the spirit doctor answered questions from the press

and the team of "doctors" who were allowed to observe the operation. I emphasize the word *doctors* because I was unable to determine how many in the group were actually medical doctors, and given my own name tag and the honorific use of the word *doctor* in Brazil, I was not at all sure which doctors were real ones. One interchange addressed the issue of the type of operation, and the question appeared to come from a real doctor.

"Why do you do only simple cyst operations?" one doctor asked.

"I also do surgery at a distance—" Dr. Fritz began to answer, but Poubel interjected: "It is true that all of this could be done by conventional medicine, but it is done without anesthesia."

Another "doctor" asked a more philosophical question: "We know many doctors who do not believe in God, but despite the fact that they don't believe in God, they are good people and do, as professional doctors, very good treatments."

"Imagine, my brother, if these doctors believed," Dr. Fritz answered as he continued with his operation. "They are a minority, but they exist."

"In other words," the man continued, "medicine allows a very big link—"

"Yes," Dr. Fritz interrupted. "All the major centers of health . . . have a spiritual cover independent of the conventional team. If one or another part unites in a state of higher consciousness—I'm not talking about mediumship—it is a great step, and it will cure even unknown diseases. Yes?"

"Are there many diseases that we doctors haven't yet discovered?" another observer asked.

"Yes," Dr. Fritz answered in his thick foreign accent. "Inconceivably. Definitively."

As just one observer among many, I did not have much access to the patients. I was only able to interview the first patient, who had remained calm and smiling as Dr. Fritz had cut into her breast, stuck his fingers inside, and pulled out a cyst about the size of an adult thumb above the knuckle. She confirmed that she had not received anesthesia and did not

feel any pain during the operation, and she seemed to have a great deal of faith in her otherworldly patron. The other women patients also did not seem to be in pain during their operations, but the man who was having the cyst removed from his back did appear to be in pain. During the operation, Dr. Fritz appeared to recognize that the man was in pain, and at one point he interrupted the operation, gave the man a very hard slap on the back, and commanded to him in a loud and authoritative voice, "Raise your thoughts to Jesus," just as Joãozinho in Colonel Cícero's center said when he gave me passes. The suggestion appeared to help the man. In all the cases, there was relatively little bleeding, but then I do not remember much bleeding from my own arm operation either.

At a party a few days later, I met a surgeon who was a prominent figure in the medical profession in Rio de Janeiro and in high-level political circles. Predictably, he was strongly opposed to spirit surgery, and he told me in no uncertain terms that Dr. Edson was a fraud who should be behind bars. "The problem is the slow and corrupt judicial system in our country, which has not cracked down on charlatanism. If this were the United States, things would be different," he told me.

I found it interesting that despite his strong feelings against Dr. Fritz, this doctor was open-minded on the topic of paranormal phenomena. He thought that parapsychology should receive more recognition than it did, and he seemed surprised when I told him that parapsychology is frequently attacked as a pseudoscience in my own country. The doctor then added that perhaps Dr. Fritz was a subconscious personality and not a simple case of fraud, but in any case he should not be practicing medicine.

Less controversial is a second type of "mediumistic surgery," as the phenomena is called in Spiritist circles. I experienced this second type at a Spiritist center in Niterói to which Hercílio took me one evening in November. In this center, Hercílio and I did not introduce ourselves as researchers; we simply went as frequenters. Since I was not required to speak, I could blend in and perhaps go unnoticed as a for-

eigner. Sometimes this procedure is useful, because one can see the session without worrying if the mediums have made changes due to the knowledge that a researcher or a foreigner is visiting them. In other words, I could sidestep the "for the English to see" phenomenon.

The rules of this center were very strict regarding attire and food. They explicitly required that patients wear light-colored clothing and refrain from drinking, smoking, and eating meat for twenty-four hours prior to the operation. In compensation, there was no period of "indoctrination," a pleasant relief after the hours of speeches, videos, and sermons that I had sat through in Poubel's center. Instead, the frequenters sat quietly in rows in a room with a table at the front on which sat several bottles of water. Gradually, the members of the center called the frequenters, who then went into the main chamber.

All the frequenters were eventually called inside, where they received treatment. I did not have to give a medical history to anyone—presumably the spirits had their ways of knowing what to do. Some of the frequenters appeared to have a long-standing relationship with the mediums, and there were clearly levels of complexity to the operations. I received only the simplest treatment: spiritual injections.

Inside the main chamber, I sat on a chair and listened to the classical music playing in the background. The mediums, wearing green surgical gowns, motioned to me to take off my shirt and belt and to unsnap my pants. A nurse medium (a woman) then took two cotton swabs and rubbed my temples, and following this the "doctor" medium (a man) gave me a spiritual injection. The syringe was invisible, but he dug his fingernail into my arm until I could feel the pain. When he withdrew the invisible syringe (and his fingernail), there was a red mark on my skin but it was not quite bleeding. The doctor medium put a cotton swab in my hand—the same arm that had received the injection—and then placed my hand to my nose, where I held the cotton in place. I thought for the moment that the cotton might have ether in it, but it had no smell: ethereal ether. The nurse medium remained standing behind me, moving slightly to the rhythm of the music and

keeping her hands on my temple. No one spoke during the operation.

When the woman finished, two men came and gave me a second injection and a new cotton swab treatment. Then they unzipped my pants, pulled my underpants down slightly (enough to feel embarrassing but not to be revealing), and they applied cotton swabs with both hands to four parts of my belly. As far as I was able to tell, they applied the same procedure to women, many of whom were elderly. The mediums exerted considerable pressure on my belly, and the hand of one medium on my liver—which had been sensitive since childhood—was quite uncomfortable. As far as I could tell, the injections had no effect on my health, neither positive nor negative.

They then sent me to another room toward the back, where I put my shirt back on while two elderly women put their dresses back on. I also could see some patients who were given additional treatment. They were lying on the operating table where the mediums performed a pantomimelike operation above the body of the patient. As far as I could tell, they did not cut into the body of the patients: they were operating on the spiritual body or "perispirit."

Since this type of operation involves no physical intervention and presents little if any danger to the patient, it is much less controversial within the Spiritist movement than the operations of Edson Queiroz. However, with Dr. Edson it was more difficult for the medical profession to make the charge of illegal practice of medicine stick, since he was also a member of the medical profession. Nevertheless, from time to time he was arrested or taken into police custody, and he continued to face a series of prosecutions until his death.

PRESBYTERIAN INTERLUDE

One evening, after a delicious dinner at the house of Hercílio and Geni, their niece invited me to attend a Presbyterian Church service. I was curious to learn how the religion of my own upbringing might have become Brazilianized in the land of

the Southern Cross, so I readily accepted the spur-of-the-moment invitation. The service, held on a Sunday evening rather than a Sunday morning, as was the custom in American Presbyterian churches, lasted two and a half hours instead of the one hour to which I was accustomed.

Unlike the Presbyterian services that I had attended in American churches during my childhood and youth, the Brazilian Presbyterian service began with singing, and the singing is what stands out in my memory. The singing lasted for quite a while by my standards, and it was followed by prayer, informal comments, more singing, baptism (the extended, not the nuclear, family showed up), more singing, a reading from the scripture (Solomon on the omnipotence and omnipresence of God), a sermon (on the same subject, about thirty to forty-five minutes rather than twenty), prayer, more singing, informal remarks (a farewell to two students who were leaving to study abroad), the offering, the Lord's Prayer, and more singing. Brazilian Presbyterians apparently like to sing. Little wonder: the music was very different from the traditional, rock-of-the-ages hymns I had heard in Presbyterian churches growing up. Instead, the songs were catchy Brazilian tunes with a rock-of-the-samba rhythm. It was all sing-along, and, as I had noticed at parties where someone brought a guitar and we sang, there was little if any harmonization. I wondered if the urge to sing harmony had something to do with the streak of individualism that cuts across all aspects of American culture, just as the urge not to harmonize had to do with what DaMatta (1991) calls the "relational" sense of self that is more characteristic of Latin Americans.

The Presbyterian church had a sole cross at the front and just one pulpit, with nothing else on the walls. Some people repeated the prayers of the minister, raising their right hands during the prayer or standing with both arms raised in adulation. I had never seen anyone do this in all my years of Presbyterian church-going in the United States. The somewhat class-conscious liberal Presbyterians I knew would have considered the practice "lower-class," the ways things are done in

fundamentalist and African-American churches. I also noticed that in the Brazilian church some people knelt when they prayed. In the United States I was taught never to kneel in church, because it signified bowing to the false authority of the church or even the Pope instead of to the true authority of one's own conscience.

In general the mood was one of joyful celebration, but the overall tone reminded me more of the television evangelists than the generally liberal, intellectual Presbyterian ministers I heard while growing up. When I described the service to my father, he said that my experience was probably typical because the Presbyterian Church overseas tends to be more evangelical, emotional, and fundamentalist, as opposed to the ecumenical, intellectual, and liberal tradition that was more common back home.

However, I should also point out that I recently had occasion to visit the Presbyterian church in my hometown in Ohio after nearly twenty years away from it. I was surprised to find that the church had doubled or tripled in size in a suburban area that had not grown significantly. The church also had a new building, parking lot, and sanctuary, and it hosted three enormous Christmas Eve services that evidently attracted members from all over the West Side of Cleveland. The growth of my hometown church was all the more impressive given the results of a recent survey of 500 American Presbyterian baby boomers that revealed how they were leaving the church in great numbers (Johnson, Hoge, and Luidens in press). During the past quarter century the overall membership in the American Presbyterian church has dropped from more than four million to less than three million, and other "mainline" Protestant churches have suffered similar membership losses. I attributed the rapid growth of my hometown church to its new evangelical fervor, a dramatic change from what I remember from the early 1970s. I suspect that the church was able to grow by shifting away from liberal Protestant theology and by finding a new sociological niche of wealthy evangelicals who want the prestige of the Presbyterian label but not the liberal, intellectual tradition that often

accompanies it. If baby boomers like me, who were slated to become the next generation of the liberal, "mainline" Protestant tradition, have apparently abandoned the church in great numbers, then certainly my hometown church would not be alone in considering the option to reposition itself as an upscale alternative in the growing evangelical market.

It is probably not a coincidence that the New Age movement in the United States is closely linked to the baby-boom generation. The term *New Age* is a loose label for people who are exploring alternative religious traditions, often non-Western. It is possible, then, that at least some of the American baby boomers who are reading New Age books, meditating in Eastern religious groups, and frequenting psychics and alternative healers are among the apparently large numbers of baby boomers who have left mainline Protestant churches.

In Latin America, however, Spiritists were concerned with an opposite direction of movement. For example, when I spoke with Spiritists during a visit to Puerto Rico in 1989, they seemed to be concerned with a movement from Spiritism to the evangelical, fundamentalist, and Pentecostalist sects. Certainly, throughout Latin America those forms of Protestantism are growing rapidly, and although most of the converts to Protestantism in Latin America are probably coming from nominal Catholics, Spiritists seem to be feeling the competition as well. Given the lack of good, comparative statistical data on conversion patterns in Latin America, one can only speculate on general tendencies. Although such speculation is interesting, I do not think it is appropriate yet to make claims to the effect that Latin America is becoming Protestant (see Stoll 1990). Spiritism, Umbanda, and the African Brazilian religions in Brazil are all growing alongside the Pentecostalist, evangelical, and fundamentalist sects. My guess is that Protestantism in Brazil, and perhaps in other parts of Latin America, will probably convert many Spiritists, but at the same time it may end up serving as a conveyor belt that will lift people out of nominal Catholicism and convey the more educated converts into Spiritism, Theosophy, Silva Mind Control, New Age groups, Buddhism, and other alter-

native religious and philosophical traditions (see Hess 1992a). Perhaps at the most general level it is less a phenomenon of American baby boomers "abandoning" religion or Latin Americans "turning" Protestant and more one of diversification of the religious arena. Throughout the Americas (and indeed the world), the hegemony of the formerly dominant religions seems to be breaking down as a variety of new religions have emerged in their place.

A MIXED SPIRITIST-UMBANDA CENTER

The various Spiritist, Umbanda, and Candomblé centers and temples in Brazil afforded one context for ongoing creativity and diversification. No one center or temple was exactly alike; each bore the mark of its leader and a history of that leader's usually complex religious trajectory. Hercílio's temple in Casimiro de Abreu, a small town north of Rio, is a good example of the complexity of religious diversity in Brazil. Whereas Altamira's temple showed a house of Umbanda that was moving toward Candomblé, Hercílio's temple might be described as a mixed Spiritist-Umbanda temple that, under Hercílio's guidance, was developing more toward Spiritism.

Hercílio was the President of the Spiritist Temple of Our Lady of Carmen, founded in the 1960s by a Spiritist from Rio named Maria de Carmen. The town of Casmir de Abreu was extremely poor, and much of the activities of the center were dedicated to charity work. As part of this work, Hercílio organized a distribution of clothing and, at Christmas, toys for tots. His friend, a medical doctor whose name—in deference to his standing among his colleagues—I shall leave unmentioned, operated a small pharmacy on the temple's premises where he dispensed free medical treatment and prescriptions (all allopathic, rather than homeopathic). Hercílio stocked the pharmacy with donations from pharmacists in Niterói.

In addition to these charitable activities, Hercílio also ran sessions in the evenings. The sessions were difficult to classify as either Spiritist or Umbandist, and probably the center was the type that Professor Camargo had in mind when he

developed the idea of the mediumistic continuum. Hercílio told me that he included Umbandist elements in his sessions because the local people were not ready for a completely Spiritist center, but the peculiar character of his sessions was also a reflection of his ecumenical approach to religion in general. Hercílio saw the work of his sessions as teaching the local population the core values of a religious worldview, one that included a sense of compassion and respect for other people and for nature.

On the one hand, most Spiritists would feel quite comfortable in his center. At the front of the room, there was the traditional table with a white tablecloth and pitchers of water, and on the walls were quotations from the gospels. Likewise, the session I observed began with classical music and a reading from a Spiritist book, and it ended with drinking the purified water from the *cafezinho* cups, as in Coronel Cícero's center.

On the other hand, the center had a statue of the Virgin Mary at the front as well as figures of St. George and the sea goddess Iemanjá, and it had a picture of an African slave spirit (*preto velho*) in the back. There was also an altar space to the front of the room but off to the side, where candles burned next to the written requests of the frequenters. Likewise, the middle part of the session consisted of a series of disobsession rites and passes that had a distinctly Umbandist flavor. For example, while in a "state of sainthood," that is, while receiving his spirit guide, Hercílio drew designs on the floor (*pontos riscados*) and burned candles. His spirit guide during this session was an African slave spirit called Grandpa Congo Stone (*Vovô Pedra do Congo*). Furthermore, the classical music of the beginning of the session was replaced by singing. The mediums, dressed in white like Umbanda mediums, received various spirits, among them the Native American (*caboclo*) and African slave (*preto velho*) spirits of Umbanda.

Thus, in Hercílio's center, everything came together—Spiritism and Umbanda, spiritual healing and orthodox medical treatment—without contradiction and all under the aegis of Christian morality. Even the doctor, who admitted that the

people who came to him for treatment in his pharmacy in the morning also went back to Hercílio for treatment on the "astral plane" at night, told me that although he was not really a Spiritist, he felt better about himself whenever he returned from a visit to Casimiro de Abreu and his work as the "doctor of the poor."

A NEW YEAR AND A NEW REPUBLIC

I spent New Year's Eve of 1985 on the Beach of Copacabana with Márcio and several of our friends. It was a memorable New Year's Eve, for it was filled with hope that the years of military dictatorship were coming to an end. Everywhere I looked there were people, tens of thousands of people. They had congregated on the beach to make offerings to the *orixá* of the seas, Iemanjá, as well as to walk, talk, drink, flirt, and shoot off fireworks—fireworks, not just sparklers—in every direction. And of course, in this wonderful meeting and mingling of this world and the other, everyone was also dancing to the rhythms of samba in the night. The nocturnal chaos was almost unimaginable for a gringo accustomed to the controlled celebrations of fireworks during the Fourth of July. Most of the rockets and fireworks went off in the air either directly overhead or above the water, but some came perilously close to the tens of thousands of people gathered on the beach. I was amazed that no one was hurt and that the government was not regulating the fireworks. When I first heard a news report in 1989 about the disaster in Rio during New Year's Eve, I was sure it was going to be a firework that struck the crowd and not, as turned out to be the case, a tourist boat that sank off the coast.

When midnight arrived, we all looked toward the top of the luxurious Hotel Meridien, where we witnessed the cascading of a giant wall of fire, a spectacular firefall that put to shame the tiny Times Square ball back in New York. The Hotel Meridien became to me a symbol of what is called the "Brazilian reality," the paradox of poverty amid plenty, the day I noticed that when I stood at a certain point along the

sidewalk of Copacabana Beach, I could see behind this luxurious five-star hotel a shantytown (*favela*) sprawling along the hillside that led up to Sugar Loaf Mountain. This sharp contrast between rich and poor is typical of Brazil, and it often leaves a strong impression on visitors (Hess 1988a).

Looking the other way, toward the water, the middle class and poor were coming together in Rio's famous New Year's Eve rituals: the Umbanda mediums had made large ceremonial arrangements that they dedicated to Iemanjá, and anyone was free to contribute an offering to the goddess of the sea. Iemanjá is associated with the Virgin Mary, so this can hardly be characterized as a "pagan" ritual. In Aparecida, São Paulo, there is a great cathedral dedicated to Our Lady of the Apparition (*Nossa Senhora da Aparecida*), and at the center of the cathedral is a small wooden statue of Mary, whom some fishermen found one day. The black image of the virgin represents the patron saint of Brazil, and in the basement of the great Cathedral is a hall of miracles, where the thousands have come with their votive offerings and testimonials of how she has saved them from illness or disaster. Tonight was the night to pay homage to the *orixá* counterpart of Aparecida (or, more usually, Mary). The mother of the waters likes offerings of bottles of champagne, mirrors, white lilies, white roses, and white candles. Ironically, the purity of the gifts for this black goddess is signaled by the color "white" (for more on color symbolism in Umbanda offerings, see Hess 1992b).

"I haven't seen this many people and fireworks in one place since I was in Boston in 1976 for the bicentennial," I told Márcio.

"You would never get that many people together in one place to celebrate Independence Day here," Márcio responded in his characteristic vein of ironic comparativism.

"Maybe this will be a kind of Independence Day," I said hopefully. "Independence from the dictators."

The members of our party all agreed to a toast—independence from the dictators—and our wish turned out to come true, at least in a way, for a few weeks later the electoral college voted against Paulo Maluf, the corrupt Presidential can-

didate of the military party. "No one wants Paulo Maluf to be President," Márcio once said. "Not even Paulo Maluf's mother." No one, that is, except the military, which had rigged the electoral college so that Maluf was nearly guaranteed to win. But the clever leader of the opposition, the wily politician named Tancredo Neves, who came from Minas Gerais—the home of the Inconfidência, the ill-fated Brazilian Republican revolution—had cut a deal with disaffected members of the military party and managed to garner enough votes to put his opposition candidacy over the top. The deal was that Tancredo would accept as his vice-president José Sarney, a conservative politician from the northeast who had been a member of the military party for years. It was a marriage of convenience. As they said of President McKinley in my own country (and more recently of President Bush after he chose Dan Quayle as his running mate), all Tancredo had to do, once elected, was not die.

On the day of the fateful election, I decided not to go into Rio to the Cinelândia Plaza where a big celebration (or protest) was planned. Instead, I took the safer option and stayed home with some friends to watch the election on television. When the vote that put Tancredo over the top took place, my friends stated cynically that we should just watch and see: the military would yet figure out a way to declare the vote invalid. But I heard from my windows a great roar ringing through the city: people everywhere had rushed out in the streets waving yellow—the symbol of the opposition and the campaign for "direct elections now!" (*direitas já*)—and they were dancing and celebrating the end of twenty-one years of military dictatorship. Fortunately, my friends' sad prediction did not come true. The military did not dare to declare invalid a vote that was so popular, for the people were united, and as they say in protest marches throughout Latin America, the people united will never be defeated.

Early 1985 was a time of great optimism, and my first Carnival (Mardi Gras) in Brazil will always remain my favorite. People were calling it the "Carnival of democracy," and the musician Chico Buarque wrote a new song that celebrated

this great change. Called "It'll Pass" (*Vai Passar*, [viy pah-'sarh]), the song was a perfect example of the delicately ironic humor that Chico Buarque shared with my Brazilian friends, for the title could be interpreted innocently as referring to a Carnival parade that will pass by on the streets or cynically as a statement about the durability of the "return to democracy." Indeed, Chico Buarque was the master of ambiguity, a trait that allowed him to get many of his very political songs past the military censors during the years of the repression. His song was therefore a most fitting commentary on the Carnival of antirepression.

After Carnival, I moved to São Paulo, where the intellectual elite of the Spiritist movement was headquartered and where I believed I had to be to do my research. I rented a room in a residential hotel and, since I had no friends in São Paulo, I worked and worked, visiting Spiritists and their centers and hospitals, spending days in libraries and evenings at sessions or in my room writing up my findings and ideas. It seemed like a prolonged Lent, a Lent of six months in the city of hard work and smog; I missed my friends in Rio and Niterói. My downward spiral corresponded to that of the country: on the evening before inauguration, Tancredo mysteriously underwent surgery for an intestinal problem. The country was thrown into a constitutional crisis, but the crisis was resolved when Vice-President Sarney was sworn into power. People suspected foul play (*sacanagem*) and wondered if there was a military plot behind Tancredo's illness.

At first Tancredo seemed to get better, but then his condition worsened. He was flown to the Hospital das Clínicas in São Paulo, the prestigious hospital associated with the University of São Paulo, but his condition continued to worsen. Located a few blocks from where I was staying, I passed by the hospital once or twice on the local buses. Outside the walls of the hospital, dozens, sometimes hundreds, of people, stood vigil for their ailing leader. The television journalists interviewed Umbanda mediums and homeopathic doctors, who stood outside and told the nation that they could heal Tancredo, but the medical doctors would not let them in. Instead,

they finally decided to bring in an American from my hometown, a specialist from the Cleveland Clinic, but even the gringo doctor was not able to save Tancredo. All he recommended was that they lower the President-elect's body temperature a little more in order to increase the chances of beating the infection.

Everyone had been prepared for the news, but it still touched Brazilians as profoundly as Kennedy's death had touched me and other Americans twenty-two years earlier. I think almost everyone in the country shed a tear the night Tancredo died. Thousands and thousands of people marched through the streets of São Paulo as they took his body away. Tancredo's funeral procession in São Paulo took on the epic proportions that only a writer of magical realism could render convincing. In 1988 I met a woman who had visited Tancredo's grave, and she told me that his tomb had already become the site of pilgrimages. The popular religion that was springing up around Saint Tancredo was legitimated by a flurry of articles and books on the rise and fall of the great midwife of the New Republic.

It is difficult to keep the events in perspective. For example, it is difficult to say that agrarian reform, which was the centerpiece of Tancredo's new "social pact," would have been much more successful under the new president—who, after all, was not a radical—than it was under Sarney, a plantation owner from the northeast. Some people tried to maintain the optimism of the first months of the New Republic, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the articulate sociologist turned senator from São Paulo, even went so far as to insinuate that Tancredo's death might have been a blessing in disguise. After all, Brazilians would have to realize that the New Republic would be built around laws and institutions, not around people and popular leaders.

But no one was convinced. Brazilians believe that a government is only as good as the people in it, and the euphoric bubble of the Carnival of democracy had burst. Brazil seemed condemned to the law of, as I like to phrase it, "the more things remain the same, the more things remain the same."

Just when Brazilians were beginning to have hope again in their future, they were plunged once more into uncertainty and gloom.

I did not sleep well that winter, partly because I was battling an attack of scabies that I had picked up from sitting on the sofa of a friend of mine who was a doctor and worked in a health post for the poor. I found it hard to stay interested in my research project, and the romance of Kardecian Spiritism, of spirit mediums and psychic surgeons, had lost much of its luster. As the damp, cold, São Paulo winter set in, my mood turned gloomy like that of the rest of the country.

BUDDHIST INTERLUDE

In part out of curiosity, in part as an escape, I occasionally visited Liberdade, São Paulo's Japantown. It was a way of pretending not to be in Brazil. I was beginning to understand the mentality of middle-class Brazilians, with their mania for shopping Malls, luxury hotels, and small-town get-aways, and their almost desperate attempt to pretend they were not in Brazil with all the accompanying corruption, poverty, and nastiness of the streets. In Liberdade one could pretend one was in, well if not Japan, maybe an American Chinatown. Although considerably smaller than the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco, Liberdade had its own charm and several good restaurants.

On one of my visits to São Paulo's Japantown, I noticed that the neighborhood had a Buddhist temple. The paradox of Buddhism in the land of spirit mediums intrigued me, and the idea of meditating in a Zen center—with its philosophical sophistication and, above all, its refreshing absence of talk and sermonizing—appealed to me as a welcome relief from the endless lectures and commotion of Spiritist centers. I also wondered what Buddhism would look like in Brazil. Would the religion be Brazilianized just as I had found parapsychology and Presbyterianism to be?

I learned that the Buddhist temple located in the Paulista Japantown held meditation sessions on Saturday nights, which

resulted in a small turn-out of the truly dedicated or, like me, the socially stranded. When I first visited this center, I did not know what to expect, and the first time I went there I found the chapel crowded with people seated in pews that faced a huge image of the Buddha and innumerable other icons. I kept waiting for a meditation session, but as people began to talk about their memories of a deceased person, I gradually realized that I had crashed someone's funeral. At one point everyone in the room formed a line and went to the altar, where they paid their respects to the dead. No one wailed, and it was all very sedate, like a Protestant funeral back home. When the ceremony ended, everyone greeted the widow and her family and offered their condolences. As I passed by the widow, I mumbled condolences quickly and in a low voice so as not to allow them to detect my accent or ask me who I was. I left before they could ask me any questions.

When I stood on the subway platform, finally relaxing that my social faux pas had gone undetected, a man about my age who was wearing a yarmulke came over to greet me.

"Weren't you at the funeral?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"Were you close to the deceased?"

"No. Not very," I answered hesitantly.

"Neither was I," he said. "Actually, I felt kind of out-of-place there."

"So did I," I answered.

"Where are you from?" he asked. I could usually go about three sentences before Brazilians detected my foreign accent. The train arrived and we got on.

"I'm a North American. Actually, I had gone to meditate in the Buddhist center, and I thought I was attending the meditation session. It only gradually dawned on me that I had crashed someone's funeral."

"They must have canceled it tonight because of the funeral."

"I suppose. It took me a while to realize I was in the wrong place," I admitted.

He smiled. "You must have found the ritual very interesting."

"I did."

"So did I. I'm Jewish, and I've never been to a Buddhist funeral before."

"Neither have I," I answered. "Who died?"

"I didn't know the man very well. He was a shopkeeper. A thief came in and shot him."

"Did he put up a fight?"

"I doubt it. You never challenge a thief. Probably he didn't have enough money."

"Did they catch the thief?"

"No, not that I know of."

"What a shame," I said.

"Brazil is just getting worse and worse," he said.

"It looks that way," I said, nodding in agreement. The conversation was almost predictable: after Brazilians found out that I was a foreigner, they soon started to complain about their country. He and I talked about what Brazilians inevitably talk about—the sad plight of their tropical country—then we said good-bye when I arrived at my subway stop. He was very nice, the kind of person whom the Spiritists might call an "old soul," someone who had been through many incarnations and who had a very generous spirit.

I returned to the Zen Center the next Saturday, and I spent several Saturday evenings there meditating. The Korean monk who served as a teacher was a refreshing change from the Spiritist mediums. The small group of meditators—all men (at first I wondered if they were gay, but the men I met turned out to be married)—gathered before the session and we sat around a table but did not talk much. Then we followed the monk into the room, where we all sat quietly on pillows that faced the walls. There was no instruction on technique, so I used techniques I had learned back home. I tried to calm my mind by focusing on my breathing and counting, but the sounds of the city—including a radio blaring in a nearby restaurant—disrupted my attention: outside a Brazilian Saturday night beckoned.

Occasionally the master came around and straightened our backs, or, if we tilted our heads to the side (which signified a request for a slap), he hit us on the shoulder with his stick. The stick made a loud sound but did not hurt very much. After the session we met in the outer room again and sipped tea that one of us had brought along. The master answered questions, but he was extremely laconic. Silence seemed to be the preferred mode of communication. It was all very un-Brazilian. After tea and conversation we put on our shoes, and some of us (but not the monk) went next door to a bar, where we had *cafezinhos* and talked for a while, a rite of transition back to the world of Brazil.

On another day I visited the headquarters of the Messianic Church, a sect that intrigued me because it was an Asian religion that seemed to incorporate key elements from the Brazilian religious scene, such as spiritual passes and healing. Located in a high-rise building south of the downtown area, the church appeared to have a great deal of money. The people there, however, were not very friendly, and because I had no personal connection to facilitate the contact and it was only tangentially related to my research project, I did not follow up on what I suspected to be yet another new synthesis in Brazil's increasingly diverse religious arena.

The topic of the Brazilianization of Asian religions still awaits sociological and anthropological study, and the richness of the potential was evident to me when I visited a Zen center run entirely by strongly vegetarian and somewhat hippie Brazilians. Their master was a Korean who lived outside the country, and while he was away they seemed to have run their sessions in a more Brazilian way. The session I attended lasted three hours, the first of which was devoted to a talk and the second two devoted to what Brazilians call a *bate-papo*. One Brazilian explained to me that the *papo* is the soft part of the neck beneath the jaw, and a favorite dessert in the bakeries is called the *papo-do-anjo* or the "angel's neck." (The dictionary, however, says that the *papo* can also mean "paunch" or "stomach.") *Bater* means "to beat," and *bater-papo* therefore becomes a slang expression meaning to sit around and talk, or, as we

other Americans say somewhat more scatologically, "to shoot the shit." I spend so much time on the etymology of the word because the practice is a great national institution in Brazil; new friendships are formed and old ones solidified via the *bate-papo*. I see the institution as an expression of the value system known as "personalism," in which the society works not through universal laws but through personal relationships.

During this Zen *bate-papo*, everyone spoke a little in a most democratic way, a conversational style that struck me as somewhat anarchic and left me wondering when the waste of time—a very American reaction—would end. Finally we got down to work and did a little meditating. Later, I wrote in my notebook, "Brazilians, with their incessant babble, do not seem to be made for Zen," and indeed one of the men there told me that other than a monastery in the state of Espírito Santo and a Zen Center in Rio, there was not much more in the way of Buddhism in Brazil. I was told that most of the Japanese Brazilians had converted to Catholicism, Protestantism, or Spiritism (if they had not become wholly unchurched); the rest of the population had not shown nearly the interest in Buddhism that my countrypeople—the self-proclaimed "dharma bums"—had shown back home. However, the relatively poor reception of Buddhism in Brazil probably went beyond the question of elective affinities of talking cultures versus doing cultures. It is probably true that the emphasis on technique and silence in Zen were ill-suited for Brazilians, but there was another reason for the relatively poor reception of Buddhism in Brazil. If one wished to delve into reincarnation, karma, meditation, and the mysterious East, one did not have to go any further than the doctrine of Allan Kardec and the sessions of Spiritism, which were considerably more dramatic and, especially in the disobsession sessions, allowed for some extended *bate-papos*.

A CONFERENCE ON ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

As I had grown wary and tired of getting caught in long, evangelical lectures at Spiritist sessions, I was happy to embark on

a new phase of my research project, one that was really the heart of what I intended to study: the ideas of Spiritist intellectuals and the intellectuals' relations with other groups. Perhaps the most active and vociferous of the Spiritist intellectuals' institutions was the Spiritist Medical Association of São Paulo (AMESP). Founded in 1968, AMESP was originally a group of Spiritist doctors who in 1980 opened up the organization to include other professionals interested in health and related areas.

On Saturday mornings AMESP held meetings in its headquarters, an unpretentious building near the great Avenida Paulista, a main thoroughfare where the coffee planters once had their urban mansions but that today is dominated by high-rise banks and business buildings. Only here and there does an occasional mansion survive, nested in between high-rise office buildings. AMESP was located in a much smaller building that was once a middle-class home.

During the AMESP meetings, an invited guest—sometimes a member of the Spiritist movement and sometimes a non-Spiritist—gave a lecture on a topic of interest usually related to alternative therapies. I attended many of the Saturday morning meetings, and on two occasions I even gave invited lectures, one on my understanding of what American and European parapsychologists did and did not study, and the other a comparative analysis of American Spiritualism and Brazilian Spiritism. My lectures were well-received, and they provoked many questions about the nature of parapsychology and Spiritualism in the United States that revealed a lively intellectual curiosity.

AMESP is not, however, just a place for talk. It is very much a reformist institution, and its reformist efforts are directed both inside and outside the Spiritist movement. Within the Spiritist movement, AMESP urges Spiritists throughout Brazil to be more cautious about their claims of healing and to do more research. Outside the Spiritist movement, the Spiritists of AMESP have helped pioneer the introduction into Brazil of new psychotherapies such as past-lives therapies

and neurolinguistic programming (both of which use the techniques of hypnosis). More generally, they have urged the state and the health professions to consider many kinds of alternative therapies. As their bylaws state, AMESP's goals include "clarifying, propagating, and expanding the medical-Spiritist movement to the other liberal professions and to the Spiritist movement in general."

In early February I attended probably the most important event that AMESP sponsored in 1985: the First International Congress on Alternative Therapies. The official sponsors included the Saybrook Institute (United States), the Koestler Foundation (Great Britain), and the Shamanism and Healing Association (then West Germany), but as the local hosts AMESP and the São Paulo Spiritists played the most active role. Given the timing and circumstances of the Congress, it might have been interpreted as a move to reform official medicine in the wake of the transition to the New Republic, although the conference organizers cited a broader basis in the World Health Organization's call for the study of alternative therapies that take into consideration the social, cultural, and economic factors of each country. To that end, the First International Congress on Alternative Therapies brought in specialists from all over the world who delivered papers on topics as diverse as the laying on of hands and spiritual passes, past-lives therapy, disobsession and exorcism therapies, transpersonal psychology, acupuncture, color therapy, yoga therapy, homeopathy, antistress training, chiropractic, and spirit surgery.

Although the Spiritist leaders who organized the conference were careful to include a diversity of perspectives, the interests of the guest speakers, particularly those from abroad, tended to dovetail well with Spiritist ideas and therapies. For example, a large contingent of California past-lives therapists gave papers or presentations, and their ideas fitted in well with Spiritist doctrine on reincarnation and karmic disorders. Others provided quantitative studies of ostensible healing effects due to the laying on of hands, that is, a treatment that is more of less the same as Spiritist passes.

Toward the end of the conference, a few more controversial speakers appeared. Friar Albino Aresi—a Catholic parapsychologist who, unlike Padre Quevedo, seemed to accept some occultist notions such as pyramid power—spoke on parapsychological cures. Although he did not attack Spiritism directly, his therapies did not leave much room for spirits. More controversial for the Spiritists was the psychotrance therapy of Eliezer Mendes (see Mendes 1980), whose work I was able to observe later. Aware that some Spiritists did not like his form of "exorcism" therapy because he allegedly used mediums from Umbanda and Candomblé, Mendes made the following comment during his talk: "We often use the music of our roots. For this reason . . . we're sometimes confused with the rituals of Umbanda and Candomblé."

AMESP also strongly opposed spirit surgery of the type performed by Dr. Edson Queiroz, and that therapy was perhaps the most controversial of the alternatives to alternative therapies. If the conference represented an ordering or even "canonizing" of the anticanonical world of alternative therapies, the new anti-Christ was Queiroz. Most of the doctors in AMESP practiced their medicine as they learned it in medical school, and while they were very interested in noninvasive procedures such as past-lives psychotherapy or the laying on of hands, they were as shocked as their colleagues in the medical profession at the surgical procedures of Dr. Edson. AMESP therefore adopted a strong stand against the surgeon-medium, and some of its members even told me they believed not only that Queiroz's claims of hemostasis (low bleeding or stoppage of bleeding) and analgesia (low pain) could be explained as the effects of suggestion but also that his spirit surgery had resulted in the death of some patients. I was unable to substantiate their allegation about the death of patients, but I did learn that AMESP's position was extremely controversial among other Spiritists, the vast majority of whom seemed to accept Dr. Fritz's work rather uncritically.

Aware of the hostile feelings that the members of AMESP harbored toward Dr. Edson Queiroz, the controversial Spiritist medium did not appear at the conference; instead, the

journalist Gary Dale Richman gave a talk in favor of Dr. Edson's work. During the meeting Gary, who had helped me get into Dr. Edson's operations in Poubel's center back in 1983, told me how the São Paulo Spiritist conference organizers had mysteriously misplaced his paper proposal, and it was only with some insistence and personal contacts that he was able to get a space on the program. That background experience may partly account for the ending of his talk, in which he directed some thinly veiled polemical commentary toward AMESP. He ended by saying that he himself had done some automatic writing, and he had asked his spirit guide what Allan Kardec would do were the great founder of Spiritism still alive. Gary actually quoted Allan Kardec's spirit in the first person, and not surprisingly Kardec advised Spiritists to do what Gary had done—spend about two to three years around Dr. Edson researching his work carefully (in other words, to do fieldwork). Gary then ended his talk by quoting Abraham Lincoln's famous phrase, "United we stand, divided we fall."

Gary's strong statement of opinion was very characteristically American; in Brazil, one tends to submerge polemic in a series of subtle references. Although the Paulista Spiritists with whom I spoke after Gary's talk did not express outright consternation, they did say in their very polite way that because Gary he was neither a doctor nor a parapsychologist, he was not qualified to make the statements he made. One or two also mentioned his almost unheard-of hubris—daring to contact the spirit of Kardec, even if through the intermediary of his own spirit guide—which they rejected as not a bonafide spirit communication. Instead, one Spiritist suggested to me that Gary's message from Kardec was a product of "animism"; in other words, it came from his own unconscious if it was not a purely rhetorical move. In all of my readings on the Spiritist movement, I have only come across one case when the spirit of Kardec appeared through a Spiritist medium, and that was in an appeal for unity among factions toward the end of the nineteenth century. Leave it to an American to sweep away the hierarchy and go right to the top.

I was unable to determine whose claims—the pro-Edson or the pro-AMESP (and promedical profession) claims—were most accurate. I can say that when I watched Dr. Edson operate, he did not follow hospital procedures of sterilization and antisepsis, and I certainly was not willing to let him operate on me. Rather than figure out who was right, I was more intrigued by the complex sociointellectual dynamic of how intra-Spiritist controversies linked up with the relationships between Spiritists and other groups. In this case, the Americans who attended the conference wanted, in typical American show-me fashion, to see Dr. Fritz operate before their own eyes and therefore allow them to make up their own minds. They were somewhat disappointed that the conference did not include an operation by Dr. Fritz, and the Spiritist physician Dr. Maria Júlia Peres later explained to them that AMESP is not opposed to all kinds of spirit surgery, only the kind that involves physical intervention and presents a potential danger to the patient.

Dr. Edson did, however, happen to be in São Paulo at the time of the conference, and I journeyed with several other participants—almost all foreigners, and mostly Americans—to a private house a few blocks away where he performed some operations. In the first case, an American past-lives therapist complained to Dr. Edson that she had a slight sore throat, so when he went into "trance" and received the spirit of Dr. Fritz, he stuck four one-inch needles all the way into her throat. The process took about ten seconds, and when he finished he walked away to find another patient. I do not think the American woman had expected such an invasive treatment for her sore throat, and her eyes seemed to bulge a little as she stood there with the needles stuck in her throat.

"Ask and you shall receive," she said to the group.

Dr. Fritz walked around the room looking for another patient, but he returned to her fairly quickly and pulled the needles out. He then found his next patient and began to examine her. Meanwhile, another doctor, a conference visitor from abroad, examined the American therapist and told her that Fritz had punctured her jugular vein. Although it was

slightly swollen, he further explained, it would "absorb" and she would be fine. The next day I heard from friends who had attended the banquet, which was held about an hour after these operations, that she seemed quite well during the banquet.

Dr. Fritz's next patient was a woman about my age whom I had met earlier during the conference and was therefore able to interview later. A doctor with an interest in parapsychology and spiritual healing, she approached Dr. Fritz with an open mind but certainly not with the faith of the people with less education on whom he had operated in Niterói. About a year earlier, she had suffered a hysterectomy. The surgical procedure involved injecting something into her uterus to make it bloat up. The uterus was then removed and the fallopian tubes tied. She said that the operation was quite painful and she had not been well since it had taken place. Among her symptoms, her lower abdomen continued to be bloated up. When Dr. Fritz passed in front of her, she made a slight motion toward her belt buckle, and he immediately told her to take off her belt buckle and unzip her pants, which she did. He then stuck two needles in her lower abdomen about halfway between the navel and the groin, and he left the needles in throughout the duration of his other operations.

Doctor Fritz then went on to work on an American woman in her twenties, a friend of a friend of mine who had a problem of "arthritis" in her hand. He grabbed her hand and said, "This hand has sinned much, my daughter." He treated her by sticking a needle through the palm of her hand in such a way that the needle passed between the bones and came out the other side. Both women later told me that the operations were extremely painful; their experience supports the argument that the ostensible analgesic effects that I saw in Fritz's Niterói operations were probably contingent on a certain level of faith and suggestibility (see Giesler and Greenfield 1989).

The next patient was a former military man who claimed that he had been deaf for twenty-two years. After Dr. Fritz stuck a needle in his ear, the man claimed to be hearing clearly. Unlike the women with the abdominal pains and the

arthritis in the hand, I did not know this man and did not get a testimonial from him. Stanley Krippner, an American psychologist who was also present, noted to me that this kind of cure is also frequently reported for acupuncture and that the illness could have been psychogenic.

It was apparently the night of needle operations, but Dr. Fritz did remove a small lipoma from a one man's shoulder. He used a clean scalpel for this operation, and the lipoma was small—about the size of two thumbnails—so Dr. Fritz did not use stitches as he had done in some of the operations in Niterói. I also have a remaining lipoma in my arm, but when Dr. Fritz wandered toward my section of the room, scalpel in hand, I moved delicately and swiftly to the back of the crowd.

It was months later that I learned something else that helped explain the strong hostility that some members of AMESP had toward Dr. Fritz. The news brought me back to the broader political context of the transition to the New Republic. Members of AMESP were among the Spiritists who were working to reform the folk-healing (*curandeirismo*) law during the upcoming Constitutional Convention. In October I interviewed the now late Congressman Freitas Nobre—a Spiritist and lawyer as well as one of the former leaders of the opposition movement that had resulted in the New Republic. He explained to me—in the measured, formal language of a political leader being interviewed by the press—the changes that he and other Spiritists hoped to achieve in the folk-healing law. He and his Spiritist colleagues hoped to rewrite the law to allow faith healing as long as healers do not charge for their services and their procedures do not constitute a danger to the patients.

Dr. Edson apparently did not charge for his services—at least when he was working as Dr. Fritz—and, according to Gary, his *not* charging had been one of the allegations that a regional medical association had raised in an attempt to take away his license. However, I later learned that Edson had accumulated substantial wealth through "gifts," so the issue of financial gain was not clear. Nevertheless, Edson's controversial spirit surgery did present a potential risk to the patient,

because he sometimes broke with standard antiseptic procedures; if practiced by a medium who was not a trained medical doctor this kind of practice could easily qualify as *curandeirismo*. Given the political context and the fact that even the healing passe in Brazil can be interpreted—and, as I found from reading law cases, sometimes was in fact prosecuted—as a form of *curandeirismo*, it was easy to see why AMESP would want to distinguish itself and the alternative therapies it supported from the mediumistic surgery of Dr. Edson.

Although the political context of reform efforts provides one explanation of why members of AMESP would want to distance themselves from Dr. Edson, it was probably not the main reason. As trained medical doctors, the AMESP Spiritists were genuinely shocked at Dr. Edson's failure to use rigorous antiseptic procedures. Like other members of the medical profession, they were highly suspicious of healers who intervened directly in the physical body. Unlike Dr. Edson's spirit surgery, which upset the clear division between spiritual and physical therapies, the arena of alternative therapies that AMESP was defining did not challenge official medicine. Instead, it limited alternative therapies to what could in a broad sense be classified as psychotherapies, such as past-lives therapy and neurolinguistic programming. Even Spiritist therapies such as passes and noncontact spirit surgery, which were claimed to affect the human body, did not involve physical intervention in the human organism, which AMESP saw as the province of official medicine.

A VISIT TO THE SPIRITIST FEDERATION

After the Congress the Spiritists of AMESP led several tours of various Spiritist organizations, and I sometimes served as translator between the Spiritist hosts and their American guests. One of the stops was the important Spiritist Federation of the State of São Paulo (FEESP, or fay-'eh-spee), located in a large building on a sidestreet of downtown São Paulo. From the front, the FEESP headquarters looks like a small three-story building, but it extends back for an entire city

block and the back part of the building is several floors taller than the front. The Spiritist federation is large enough to accommodate its heavy use: according to the Spiritists there, they give more than four thousand passes per day and supervise more than thirty-five hundred workers in social assistance programs—figures that probably include the work of affiliated centers.

Without a doubt the largest Spiritist federation in the country, FEESP clearly swamps in size the Roustaingist Brazilian Spiritist Federation in Rio that effectively rules the National Federative Council. Over the months in Rio and São Paulo, I heard many versions about the internecine quarrels among the Spiritist federations—what I came to think of as the "federation wars"—but the details would probably only interest the people involved, and some Spiritists were wary of airing their "dirty laundry" lest zealous Catholics use the information against them. However, the President of FEESP, João Bovino, did make it clear to me during an interview that FEESP no longer had any tie with the Brazilian Spiritist Federation (FEB) in Rio; that is, Spiritism in Brazil no longer had a single umbrella organization.

I visited FEESP on a number of occasions, and when I was with the group of visiting Americans I was permitted to attend one of the mediumistic consultation sessions held in a windowless chamber in an inner sanctum of the Federation. The session was led by a medium named Dona Marta, who was the head of all the schools within the Federation. As she explained to us, this session involved the elite of the Federation's mediums. Prospective mediums must go through eight stages of passes, then the evangelical schools, the mediums' schools, and the "colleges," before they can finally join a special group of mediums that gives spiritual and health advice to clients. We were able to attend one of these special sessions, which took place in a small room lit with a bright, white, neon light.

Prior to the session, clients had come by the Federation and filled out forms that the mediums later considered. Delivered to the mediums through a chute in the wall, the forms

had questions about the medical history of the clients, their background in Spiritism or Umbanda, their previous involvement in Spiritism (such as what they had read or how often they frequented sessions), and the pains the clients were experiencing (including what part of the body). At the very bottom of the form was a series of boxes that listed the possible recommendations that the mediums later made for their clients.

The session began with a reading from a passage of Emmanuel, the evangelical spirit who writes through Chico Xavier. After the reading and some prayers, the mediums established a connection with the team of about eight or nine medical spirits. Dona Marta then got a form, called out the name of a medium, and asked the medium what his or her recommendations were. The medium then established telepathic contact—there was no "incorporation" of the spirit into the medium's body—with the guiding medical spirits, whose names were Pasteur One, Pasteur Two, and so on.

The group included nineteen or twenty mediums, of whom two were men, one young and one middle-aged. Among the women, one was black, another mulatta, and the rest—about fifteen—middle-aged to elderly white women. When called upon, the mediums gave their recommendations for the client: study more doctrine, study the gospels, attend or not attend Spiritist sessions, or develop or not develop mediumistic abilities. In addition, if the client's complaint included a bodily ailment, the medium also gave a recommendation on the type of doctor that the person should go to: allopathic, homeopathic, or the doctor of the client's choice. The medium could also choose a combination of the last three options, such as an allopathic doctor of the client's choice.

Once the session began, it moved fairly quickly, because the mediums only had to choose from the preselected list of options on the card. There were, however, potential snags. In many cases, the current form had two or three other forms stapled to it from previous visits, so Dona Marta could read the previous forms and determine if the medium's response made any sense with respect to previous recommendations.

She could also draw on her own, higher-level spirit guides. Sometimes, she said curtly to a medium, "No," and at one point she stopped the young male medium and told him he was not concentrating. (She later said that there were too many foreigners in the room and as a result the vibrations were not very good.) After she stopped this man, she proceeded to go around the room and ask the mediums what their diagnosis of the client's problem was. No one seemed to be able to agree—the mediums hit on everything from the nervous system to the kidneys—and Dona Marta finally settled on an older, trusted, woman medium, confirming the respect in which the older women, who apparently formed the inner circle of this group, were held.

THE EVOLUTION OF A SPIRITIST HOSPITAL

Another institution that we visited was the Hospital Américo Bairral, located in the city of Itapira, São Paulo. The hospital was one of the largest and best-equipped of the dozens of Spiritist mental hospitals in Brazil. Like most other Spiritist hospitals in Brazil, the Hospital Américo Bairral differed little from a Catholic or Protestant hospital: the administration was in the hands of the Spiritists, but the medical care and treatment programs were in the hands of medical professionals. The only evidence of Spiritism was the copy of Allan Kardec's *Gospel According to Spiritism* left on the patients' nightstands.

One of the most likely candidates for testing and developing alternative therapies of the type discussed in the conference would be the Spiritist psychiatric hospitals. However, because there was a lack of Spiritists trained in psychiatry or clinical psychology, in most cases the medical staffs of the hospitals were composed of what Spiritists call professionals representing "materialist" or "official" medicine. I visited several other Spiritist psychiatric hospitals in addition to the one in Itapira, and in most there was little evidence of interest in alternative therapies. One exception was the Spiritist Hospital of the Good Rest in Curitiba, where both the administra-

tion and health care were headed by a Spiritist couple: Alexandre Sech, a psychiatrist, and Maderli Sech, a clinical psychologist.

When I arrived at the 230-bed facility in Curitiba, Dr. Sech welcomed me into his office, where he described to me the history of the hospital. It had been run by a conservative doctor until 1980, after which the Spiritist board allowed the Sechs to assume control and usher in a new program. Some of the ten-member medical staff left after the change in leadership, and two of those who stayed on grumbled for a while, but according to Sech most of the doctors seemed to accept the changes with few protests. The changes included bringing in occupational therapists, introducing more psychotherapies, and cutting down on medication by as much as 40 percent over a five-year period. Electroshock treatment had apparently already ended at the hospital a few years before the Sechs took over, but it had continued in other parts of the state. Dr. Sech underscored his strong belief that such treatment was a "crime," because every electroshock treatment kills thousands of brain cells.

When I visited the hospital in March of 1985, the patients were allowed to attend a Spiritist speech and receive passes on a biweekly basis, and some of the patients had even started a Spiritist study group. At a local Spiritist center mediums received spirits and did disobsession, and Dr. Sech told me that many of the earthbound spirits they received were also ones that had attached themselves to the patients. At the time I visited, the only alternative therapy in the hospital itself (beyond the passes and doctrinal study I have already mentioned) was homeopathic medicine, but Dr. Sech had additional plans to introduce yoga therapy.

He was also exploring the potential use of "Kirlian" photography, a procedure that involves putting a finger tip or other part of the body between two photographic plates and passing an electric charge through the two plates, the result of which is a photograph that appears to be a colorful picture of the human aura. Apparently Dr. Hernani was the first Westerner to experiment with the Soviet technique, but he even-

tually became disillusioned with it. Dr. Hernani's opinion was similar to that of American parapsychologists, who after initial enthusiasm rejected the "photograph of the human aura" as an artifact caused by hand moisture and fingertip pressure. Still, Kirlian photography seemed to be popular in Brazil, where some alternative healers and doctors have used longitudinal photographs to track what they believe are changes in the health of electrical fields generated by the human aura.

Dr. Sech was somewhat more skeptical of past-lives therapy, which unlike Kirlian photography had attracted the interest of the Paulista Spiritists at AMESP. When I asked Dr. Sech if he planned to introduce the therapy for which many of the Paulista Spiritists had shown such enthusiasm, he answered that instead of being called "past-lives therapy" (*terapia de vidas passadas*) it should be termed "suggestive therapy of past-life experiences" (*terapia sugestiva de vivências passadas*). He did not think there was much evidence to support the reincarnation interpretation of the therapies, and his skepticism for a therapeutic technique that was so popular among his Spiritist medical colleagues demonstrates yet again the complexity and diversity of the Spiritist movement. Dr. Sech did go on to state that he agreed with the more general idea that alternative therapies should explore the spiritual side of human nature. "Our vision here is a holistic one," he told me. "Man is not just what he appears to be." Indeed, in this hospital the Spiritist approach has meant not only introducing alternative therapies of the type discussed at the First International Congress, but also developing more humanistic and psychosocial therapies in place of facile reliance on medication.

TEACHING AT THE SPIRITIST COLLEGE

On my trip to Curitiba in March, I also paid a visit to Ulysséa. We talked for a while about the status of the college. They now had two schools: the School of Sciences and Humanities and the School of Biopsychic Sciences. The latter was subdi-

vided into parapsychology and yoga. When I asked if they had plans to become a university, he explained that in Brazil one needs a total of five schools in order to form a university. He hoped someday to have Schools of Biology and Health, Agrarian Sciences, Psychiatric Sciences, Education, and Spiritist Christian Communion.

Ulysséa was a visionary, and his vision of a great university for the Spiritist movement had inspired many others to contribute their efforts to his school. "Why don't you teach a course for us?" he asked me.

"Me? I don't know if I'm qualified," I answered.

"Sure you are. Besides, the person I had lined up," he went on, referring to a Spiritist sociologist whom I had met on a previous visit, "turns out not to be able to teach the course."

"What kind of course did you have in mind?"

"Para-anthropology," he answered.

"Para-anthropology?" I asked, remembering my previous visit and the discussion with the Umbanda and Candomblé representatives. "What does that involve?"

Ulysséa then pulled out a folder prepared by Doctor Hernani, who was the intellectual father of the parapsychology program at the university. Doctor Hernani's plan laid out in detail the overall curriculum and the place of para-anthropology in it: the course was the fifth unit of the first phase of the first year of the program in parapsychology. During this phase, students learned about questions of epistemology, philosophy, and detection of fraud; in other words, they developed a background for the second phase of the first year, which was when they would study "experimental parapsychology."

The outline for the para-anthropology course was as follows:

I. Evidence of Paranormal Manifestations in Prehistory
   A. Man in Prehistory
   B. The Cult of the Dead
   C. Fire and Anthropomorphic Representations
   D. Stones, the Cult of the Dead, and the Poltergeist
   E. The Fetal Position of Cadavers and Reincarnation

II. Paranormal Phenomena of Religious Traditions
  A. The Code of Manu
  B. The Tibetan Book of the Dead
  C. Oriental Religions
  D. The Old and New Testaments

III. Contemporary Primitive Religions
  A. Candomblé, Umbanda, Quimbanda
  B. Paranormal Phenomena Observed During Rituals
  C. Magical Rituals

I examined this outline and the more detailed syllabus that followed. I recognized ideas that Doctor Hernani had written about in the Spiritist newspaper *Folha Espírita*, and I wondered what the leaders of the Umbanda Federation whom I had met in 1983 would say about having their religion included in the category of "contemporary primitive religions." I felt caught in a bit of a dilemma. On the one hand, I disagreed with what appeared to be a Spiritist appropriation of my own discipline, anthropology, especially because it appeared to me that implicitly anthropology was being used to establish a hierarchy between Spiritism and "primitive religions." On the other hand, I also saw teaching the course as a big break, an open-door to fieldwork in a much more participatory mode. It was also my first opportunity to do college-level teaching. I thought about how more than a century ago, a similar crisis in the Pestalozzi Institute in Switzerland provided another young intellectual, Allan Kardec, with his first teaching opportunity.

"How closely would I have to stick to this syllabus?" I asked.

"You do whatever you wish," Ulysséa told me. "The course is your course."

"This course seems to have a Spiritist tilt to it. Do you care if I teach a course with a more secular orientation?"

"Do whatever you want," he answered. "We do not tell people how to think. Even Friar Albino [Aresi, the Catholic parapsychologist] has taught here."

It is true that Spiritists place a high value on freedom of

speech and thought, and their university was among the most ecumenical of all of the Spiritist institutions in the country. As I learned, many of the students and even some of the faculty were not Spiritists, and the orientation of the school was by necessity ecumenical. I therefore prepared my syllabus and sent a proposal to Ulysséa, and he accepted it readily. I soon encountered one reason why it is so difficult to teach anthropology in Brazil: library resources are spotty, and translations of classic English and French anthropology sources are scarce. For example, a translation of Emile Durkheim's classic *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* was not available in Portuguese, and many of the other great texts of the anthropology and sociology of religion were translated in abysmal abridged editions. I finally settled on a reading list that contained Portuguese-language selections from James Frazer and Marcel Mauss on magic, E. E. Evans-Pritchard on witchcraft, Claude Lévi-Strauss on shamanism, and Juana Elbein dos Santos on the concept of *axé* (ah-'shay, roughly "life force") in the African religions of Bahia.

In my first class (each class was a session of several hours), I introduced students to the "thought of orthodox anthropology," which involved giving students a background on current anthropological thinking on issues such as culture and evolution. In the second class, I did my best to introduce students to the anthropology of religion. I talked for a while about the differences between the psychological approach of Frazer and the sociocultural approach of Mauss, but I found that most of the students had not done their reading and seemed unable to follow me. As I later learned, failure to do the reading was a common occurrence in college classes, not only in many Brazilian universities but also in many American ones, and my expectations that the students would do the readings probably revealed more about my status as a tenderfoot teacher than about Brazilian students. I then reviewed a bibliography of reports by anthropologists who claimed to have experienced extraordinary or uncanny phenomena in the field, but student interest waned when they found that most of the materials were in English.

"And Carlos Castaneda?" one of them asked. "What do you think of him?"

"Well, most anthropologists think of his writings as fiction."

"Oh, come on. Really?"

"Yes. His ethnographic observations are not very accurate, and as far as most people can tell, he never did fieldwork among the Yaqui, he never met a Yaqui named Don Juan, and he borrowed many of his ideas from other sources."

The students challenged me, and I gave them more information about the "Castaneda hoax." While some of the students seemed skeptical of what I had to say, many of them seemed very disappointed and even saddened by my comments, which apparently came as a revelation to them. I felt uncomfortable, as if I were breaking the news about Santa Claus. Questions about Castaneda were about the extent of the level of interest that my classes on anthropology provoked, but I did receive many questions on parapsychology. As a result, at the end of the next class, I began to discuss what I knew about American and European experimental parapsychology, and the students seemed to pay more attention. I cautioned them that none of the experimental findings had achieved a level of strict replicability and that parapsychology was therefore widely criticized in the general scientific community, but I was surprised by the interest that the discussion provoked. Why would something so exciting as the anthropology of shamanism and magic provoke so little interest, whereas the dry, experimental studies of extrasensory perception and psychokinesis made them sit up and pay attention? When more questions came, I realized why.

"Is it true that the United States and the Soviet Union are engaging in a psychic arms race?" one student asked.

"Well, I have read that some of the parapsychology laboratories in the United States receive military funding," I answered, "but I think it is a long step between receiving military funding and having military applications. Many people think it is a waste of money, and I think there was even a scandal when one journalist revealed that the Defense Depart-

ment was spending money on ESP research." I explained how there was a theory that psychics might be able to use ESP to detect where the Soviets put their missiles or hide their submarines. I also noted that from what I had heard of the research, it had not been very successful. My answer seemed only to confirm their suspicions that the superpowers were engaged in a huge mind-wars race, but I did not know any more about the topic, so the discussion did not go much further.

From questions that I occasionally received, I learned that some Brazilians, probably including a few of my students, suspected that I was a spy who had come to study Spiritism to gain knowledge that could be used in the psychic arms race. Brazilians often asked about my sources of funding. Some were amazed that any American foundation or government agency would fund a dissertation project on Spiritism in Brazil, but others wanted to know about possible ties between the American government and the Fulbright Commission and Social Science Research Council. When I answered that the Fulbright Commission was part of the Department of Education, some seemed suspicious that I was receiving funds indirectly from the CIA through a Department of Education conduit. At first I thought such beliefs were the result either of Third-World paranoia or a complete lack of sophistication (educated Brazilians, for example, know that they like us can receive funding from their own government agencies and foundations to study abroad), but when I took under consideration the long history of American CIA-sponsored, covert operations in Latin America, I really could not blame some Brazilians for holding those beliefs.

OCCULT FORCES IN THE CAPITAL

In between one set of my weekend classes in Curitiba, I met up with Ulysséa and many of the people from the Bezerra de Menezes College in Brasília, where in early June there was a big conference on parapsychology and alternative medicine that included participation from the Spiritist movement.

Although Friar Albino Aresi was scheduled to speak, the parapsychologists of this conference were generally more oriented toward the Spiritist than the Catholic end of the spectrum. However, because almost any topic fell under the name of "parapsychology," it was hard to characterize the allegiances and assumptions of many of the speakers. Certainly General Uchôa, a retired military man turned UFO expert who was one of the keynote speakers, blasted both official science and the parapsychology of the Europeans and North Americans as positivist and materialist.

The choice of Brasília as the conference location was strategic in several ways. One of the keynote speakers, the "Egyptologist" Iara Kern, compared Brasília to Akhenaton, the Egyptian city of magic. She found in Oscar Niermeyer's architectural achievements hermetic and numerological meanings similar to ones that occultists attribute to the Egyptian pyramids. I still have a postcard that I bought at the memorial for President Kubitschek that shows the architecture of Brasília overlaid with pyramids and the rainbow colors of a prism. Although Spiritists tended to dismiss pyramid power as occultist nonsense, I frequently encountered Brazilians who believed in "kefrantherapy," or therapy accomplished by placing people inside or under small pyramids. My favorite comment was from one Brazilian parapsychologist, who said that he was sure there "was some kind of power of relaxation in them," since at a conference he once fell asleep under a pyramid.

Residents of Brasília seemed to have been busy transforming their city—which, like me, was not yet thirty years old at the time—from a rationalized, modernist metropolis into one of the centers of Brazilian occultism. Part of their reasoning involved a belief that a nuclear holocaust will destroy the northern hemisphere as well as much of the southern hemisphere. Some Brazilians I met claimed that an American intelligence report found that in the event of nuclear Armageddon, the Andes will serve as a protection against the prevailing winds. Most of the fallout will be dumped on the western side of the mountains, and Brasília will emerge relatively

unscathed. As a result the Brazilian capital will be transformed into the new world capital of the third millennium, which will be a new age of cooperation and spirituality.

In a more this-worldly key, another reason for choosing Brasília as the conference site was because the conference organizers saw themselves as bringing new ideas to the New Republic. Indeed, one of the keynote speakers, the Brasília Federal District Governor José Aparecida, hailed natural medicine as the medicine of the people and said that official medicine represented "one more side of Brazil that must change." Ulysséa, one of the conference organizers and frequently the coordinator of the sessions, also gave an opening speech in which he called for educational reforms and hailed "a new epistemology for the New Republic." As if to signal that the government was taking these ideas seriously, during the conference Ulysséa announced that the Ministry of Welfare had accepted acupuncture, homeopathy, and naturopathy as officially sanctioned alternative therapies.

The conference was far from the scholarly or academic variety, and if the government decided to include a few alternative therapies as part of the official state medicine, it was appeasing a potentially large constituency without necessarily finding a new medicine—let alone a new epistemology—for the New Republic. The constituency at the conference spread its roots deeply into the soil of Brazilian mysticism. A list of the topics presented gives a flavor of the breadth of the discourse: self-development through oriental arts, mediumistic painting, Amazonian plants with paranormal effects, iridology (using the eye for diagnosis and healing), pyramid therapy, acupuncture, yoga, alternative communities, Kirlian photography, ecology, past-lives therapy, meditation, paranormal music, interstellar biocommunication, astrological alchemy, dowsing, ufology (the study of UFOs), the power of the mind, interplanetary hierarchies, cosmobiology, and, perhaps the most syncretic of all, the relationship between UFOs and the *orixás*.

Rather than consider the conference one of alternative science, it might be better to view it as a gathering of the occult tribes, in which the operational principle was the inclusive

one of letting all voices be heard rather than the exclusive one of accepting only papers that met a certain minimum of scientific or intellectual rigor. In fact, the Spiritist intellectuals who appeared at the conference were among the few people who showed any concern with methodology, and in the carnival of heterodoxies the Spiritists sometimes sounded as if they were serving as the mediums for official science. However, even the Spiritists' presentations were theoretical or philosophical in nature, and, with the exception of a talk by the Spiritist Ney Prieto Peres, a close friend of Dr. Hernani and an active member of AMESP, there was little discussion of methodology or of empirical research.

TEACHING OBSESSIONS

When I returned to Curitiba several weeks later to give another set of classes, I was faced with the second, more difficult part of my course. It had been easy to teach the "anthropology" part of "para-anthropology," but what was I to say about the "para" part? My original plan had been to represent, as an anthropologist, the cultures of what the students perceived to be "orthodox anthropology" and "orthodox parapsychology." The second term was a bit of an oxymoron when one considers that in Europe and North America parapsychology is itself a heterodox science that the broader scientific community tends to dismiss as pseudoscience. After the conference, I was well aware that what was called parapsychology in Brazil had little to do with the quantitative, experimental approach of the Anglophone parapsychology community. (The rejection of quantitative methods reminded me of the differences between Brazilian and American sociologists, and I wondered if in general there was a tendency for Brazilians to steer away from number crunching.) Because I had been so appalled by the lack of interest in methodology at the Brasília conference together with the continued appeal to the mantle of legitimacy of "science," I decided to focus heavily on questions of methodology in this part of the course.

It is a little-known paradox of the politics of science that

because parapsychology is such a controversial field of inquiry, those experimental psychologists who have made the risky career choice of doing research on extrasensory perception or psychokinesis have had to develop very sophisticated experimental designs in order to be able to answer to the close scrutiny that their experimental protocols frequently receive. Thus, although one may quibble about specific ESP experiments and find experimental flaws in them, for the most part the design principles and statistical measures that the *best* of contemporary experimental parapsychologists follow are comparable to—and, I would argue, often superior to—those of the *bulk* of experimental psychologists. Thus, for the second part of the course I taught the principles of experimental design that one would learn in any introductory course in experimental psychology, and I gave an example using parapsychology experiments. I ended with a detailed discussion of how one American researcher had applied these principles to test extrasensory perception in Brazilian mediums.

After handing my students this rather unpalatable pill, I then made my own position very clear by returning to the topic of anthropology and explaining that many social or cultural anthropologists would argue that it is irrelevant whether or not mediums have psychic powers according to a definition made up by a community of scientists. We cultural anthropologists tend to be skeptical of any kind of psychological approach to human communities, particularly experimental approaches. Anthropologists are more likely to see psychologies as Western "ethnosciences" that would only further distort our understanding of different ways of thinking and acting. In other words, we tend not to start with the question of whether or not psychics, mediums, and healers actually have psychic powers or go into trance according to definitions generated by a community of Western parapsychologists, psychologists, doctors, and so on. Instead, we begin with the question of what the mediums and their clients believe, and how they see the world from their point of view.

My students, however, were not very impressed by my discussion of methodologies and disciplinary boundaries. Per-

haps I had made the classic mistake of the novice teacher: pitching the class to a level inappropriate to the students. However, I felt some loyalty to my own discipline and some obligation to explain to them what was more or less the "mainstream" or "official science" of cultural anthropology. I realized that I was now playing an active role in the dialogue between Spiritists and other groups, a dialogue that I had intended to study. While an anthropologist of an earlier generation might have found these circumstances very problematic, I believe, like many anthropologists of my generation, that showing respect for the ideas of other cultures means being honest about one's differences of opinion and being willing to engage in a dialogue.

Still, I was curious, both as an anthropologist and as a teacher, about how my students had reacted to what I had taught. Although most students were too polite to say directly to me that they disagreed with my approach, I did receive some direct feedback. One said to me tersely, "Your course was very scientific." I do not think the comment was meant as a compliment. Another student was more blunt: "I don't agree with your approach to anthropology and parapsychology. Para-anthropology should be a totally new field that would treat people in their totality. 'Para' means 'beyond'—it would be 'beyond anthropology.' "

Later, I had dinner with some of the younger faculty, and we had a good time discussing a range of issues having nothing to do with Spiritism or parapsychology. At one point, however, we touched on my course and how the students had perceived it, and one of the junior faculty told me that most of the students thought I was somewhat obsessed with methodology. They found me rather positivistic and materialistic, even "parochial." More diplomatically, Ulysséa told me that my class was a good basic introduction for the students, and now they would be ready for a more advanced course taught by Pedro Mundim. I met the Spiritist psychiatrist a few months later at a conference in São Paulo, where I heard him give some interesting talks on anthropology, psychiatry, and parapsychology. Unlike some Spiritists—who saw anthropology

and sociology as anti-Spiritist, materialist ideologies—Mundim found many interesting and important ideas in the social sciences. He also saw sociology and anthropology as potential allies of Spiritism, because social scientists had often questioned the studies of psychiatrists and doctors who saw in spirit mediumship a form of psychopathology. Thus, he enlisted sociology and anthropology in his own project of prodding the medical profession to be more open to Spiritists' alternative therapies.

LIBERATION SPIRITISM

Teaching in the Spiritist college placed me at a boundary where it would have been possible to cross over and become a Spiritist. I could have become the Franz Boas or Emile Durkheim of a new Spiritist science of para-anthropology. My first reaction, in the classroom, was to back away from the possibility and even to sense a repulsion at the encompassment of anthropology by Spiritism. The ideal relationship between the two, in my mind, was one of opposition and separation with a clear boundary between the two.

Yet, to think of the relationship between Spiritism and anthropology in such terms might also mean falling into a culture-bound either/or logic that is the legacy of the Enlightenment and the Reformation. I had learned from Roberto DaMatta that this kind of dualistic thinking is characteristic of Anglo-American and northern European cultures. In the Latin American and Mediterranean cultures there is a greater tendency to wallow in ambiguity and to find mediating terms between sharply opposed categories. Increasingly, I began to see Spiritism and anthropology as two positions in a more general ideological arena that they shared with a number of other discourses, worldviews, religions, and ideologies, as well as the social groups associated with them. Furthermore, Spiritism and anthropology seemed to be less two distinct possibilities and more points on a continuum of positions, not unlike the mediumistic continuum between Spiritism and Umbanda that Professor Camargo had described. Between

the religious Spiritism of the followers of Chico Xavier and the materialistic anthropology of, say, Claude Lévi-Strauss (or better, Marvin Harris), lay a number of other possibilities, ranging from the intellectual Spiritism of Doctor Hernani or Ulysséa on the one side to the accounts of the so-called humanistic anthropologists about their experiences with shamans, mediums, and sorcerers on the other. In between lay the zone of various psychologies, both "ortho" and "para." As I did fieldwork, I found my own position to be an unstable one that moved along the continuum both over time and across different settings.

In a sense, then, I had already become a medium, a discursive medium who mediated between my students in Curitiba and my teachers in Rio and Ithaca. Perhaps this realization led me to contemplate seriously other, more literal forms of mediumship. Perhaps I was troubled by the way in which I had constructed, or deconstructed, "para-anthropology" and wished to find a more fruitful way for anthropology to exist in a dialogue with Spiritism. Perhaps it was the nagging memory of the *favelados* listening to the message of humility during the campaign of the kilo, and the voice of Roger Bastide criticizing Spiritist political morality. I must confess that I do not remember the motivation for my contemplations of a novel relationship between anthropology and Spiritism that I came to think of as the Spiritism of Liberation.

People may think I was crazy to think about becoming a Spiritist intellectual, and they might try to find a good psychological cause for such an idea. Maybe, for example, I was just having trouble getting a song out of my head. It seemed that Brazilians did not value their own music, and everywhere I went I encountered American popular music. Brazilians left their mark on American music by having very specific preferences for certain British and American singers and groups; among them Dire Straits, James Taylor, and Stevie Wonder stand out in my memory. It was a song by the latter, and especially the refrain "I just called to say I love you," that I kept hearing everywhere I went. It seemed that the song was on

everyone's mind; I translated it more than once for friends and acquaintances, including Spiritists, and eventually I found it hard to get the song out of my mind.

It may have been at this time that I also began to fantasize about becoming a medium. Of course, as an American I would enjoy the possibility of challenging a hierarchy, so if I were to become a medium, I would go right to the top and my spirit guide would be Allan Kardec himself. Notwithstanding the advice of one medium that I had a great potential as a physical effects medium, I would instead become a psychographer. In other words, I would take dictation from the "codifier" in the kind of telephonic procedure that Gary Dale Richman and Chico Xavier used. However, my Kardec would be a codifier with a difference. By the late twentieth century, so I imagined, he would have had time to talk at length with the spirits such as Malcolm X, Salvador Allende, and Simone de Beauvoir, and he would have had time to reflect on the place of Spiritism in the "Brazilian reality." In short, Kardec would have revised his doctrine and reformulated it as the Spiritism of Liberation. I fantasized, albeit never too seriously, my quasiapotheosis as the new "pope" of Brazilian Spiritism, which would establish ties with other progressive theologies and movements. Rather than become the new Boas of para-anthropology, I would become the new Kardec of liberation Spiritism.

I actually wrote out some twenty pages of the new doctrine, but then the in*spir*ation abandoned me. I called on Spiritism to find its "scientific basis" in critical social theory rather than parapsychology, and I called on mediums not only to give passes but also to open up passages for trapped women, children, and workers. It seems significant that I wrote the text in Portuguese and that my English-speaking self resisted translating it. Indeed, as I read the Portuguese text today, it seems as if it were written by another person.

I never finished the project, and I never showed *Toward a Liberation Spiritism* to any of the Spiritists I met. Some of the younger Spiritists were involved in progressive youth groups, and when I mentioned the idea of liberation Spiritism to

them, they liked the idea. Indeed, had I "gone native" and become a Spiritist, I'm sure I would have been drawn to that wing of the movement.

DISOBSESSION IN A SÃO PAULO SPIRITIST CENTER

I visited Doctor Hernani several times during this period, and he always received me warmly and with enthusiasm. In our conversations it came out that I was somewhat disappointed with many of the Spiritists I had met. They were frequently dogmatic (the Curitiba group represented an exception), and I often ended up listening to one-way sermons instead of having the enjoyable *bate-papos* that were characteristic of most other Brazilians I had met. Since Doctor Hernani was one of the first Spiritists I met in Brazil, I had formed very high expectations at the beginning of my research.

"Did you think they would all be like me?" he asked.

"I didn't expect everyone to be that interesting," I answered, "but I expected at least some of them to be like you."

He smiled at the compliment and he answered by giving a beautiful analogy that also struck me as a metaphor for Brazil: "Yes, you came into the house through the back door. The first thing you saw was the kitchen, so you thought the house was full of food, and now you have seen that the rest of the house has many bare cupboards."

I then told Doctor Hernani how I had meditated in a Korean Zen Center in the São Paulo Japantown, which I found to be a refreshing change from the incessant oratory of the Spiritist centers. I was not sure how he would take this confession, and I was somewhat worried that he might see it as a betrayal of Spiritism. However, I also knew that whatever the nature of his response, it would be another piece in the puzzle of the relations between Spiritists and other groups in Brazil.

"*Beleza*," he said, which meant "beautiful." Suzuko, his secretary of Japanese descent, remained quiet, but she smiled.

"I wasn't sure what you'd think about that," I said.

"Oh, I think Buddhism is marvelous," he responded. "Spiritism is only for us Brazilians, due to our particular state of development. We are not yet ready for Buddhism."

I could never quite tell if Doctor Hernani was pulling my leg, but when we talked for a while about Buddhism, I realized that he indeed did hold this religious philosophy in high respect. We then turned to the topic of disobsession, and I told him I hoped to make some observations of a good São Paulo Spiritist Center. He then gave me the number of a man named Agenor (ah-jay-'norh), who belonged to a highly respected Spiritist center in São Paulo. This Spiritist center is the last one that I will describe. It is interesting because I noticed some significant differences from the Spiritist centers I had observed back in Rio. The center also gives a taste of what the acceptable style and practices were for the intellectuals of Spiritism in São Paulo.

Agenor was a handsome balding man who looked somewhat like Yul Brynner. He had a passion for the opera, which he watched on videocassettes in his home. He spoke impeccable English, and his Portuguese was highly refined and educated. I remember once I mentioned to him that I had eaten at a huge barbecue restaurant (*churrascaria*) with some younger Spiritists, and it had only cost *três paus* (trays pows), a slang term I had picked up on the streets. *Três paus* meant three thousand cruzeiros, but (as I was to learn later) it also could mean "three dicks." Agenor stiffened at the remark and delivered a lecture on the degradation of the Portuguese language in Brazil. He impressed me as a very moral man, one with a strong sense of right and wrong who was at odds with a culture that delighted in the grey area of the in-between.

In my first meeting with Agenor, I got off on the wrong foot when I told him I had a grant to study Spiritism. He replied by giving me a long sermon about how Spiritists never accept money for their work. "Give freely what God has given freely to you," he told me, repeating the popular Spiritist maxim against charging money for their services. I had to backpeddle and explain that it was only an educational grant for the purposes of study. He seemed to accept my explana-

tion, and he agreed to make introductions for me at the center. The leading medium, Dona Regina, graciously allowed me to attend their disobsession sessions, which were closed to the public.

One difference between this center and those I had seen elsewhere became immediately evident. Before my first session, Agenor explained to me that they did not like to have the afflicted persons attend the disobsession sessions, since sometimes their presence can attract the evil spirits. Also, many personal issues are raised during the disobsession, and when the afflicted person is not present it is easier to keep the session confidential. Furthermore, as Doctor Hernani told me, sometimes the spirits turn and attack their victims if the latter are present during the session.

The disobsession sessions took place on Thursday evenings, after we all first listened to an educational lecture led by Régis Lang. The lecture was very intellectual and a welcome relief from the evangelizing sermons I had come to expect of Spiritists. The tone of the lecture was more didactic, and I had the feeling that we were in a classroom. At the second session, Régis was unable to attend, so in his place Dona Regina gave a lively talk about the fact that sometimes the mediums are not even receiving spirits. I wondered if her talk might have been a little bit "for the English to see," and my doubts were augmented when during one session she pointed out to me three mediums who were "animistic." She explained the term as meaning that the mediums were not receiving spirits but were instead only acting out their psychological problems. She told me that she permits animism as a kind of "group therapy" for the mediums. She was clearly aware of psychological explanations for mediumship, and she insisted on being able to draw distinctions between the merely psychological side of mediumship and bona fide spirit communication.

Before the session began, we said a prayer and then raised up our hands to receive the spiritual energies from above. Someone turned off the lights—leaving only a red light and the light from the streets through the window shades—and at

the same time this person turned on the classical music. I remember that they played "Ave Maria," and I believe that the music selection was the special province of Agenor.

We divided up into small groups of five, each of which had two mediums (generally women) and two supporters plus one indoctrinator. I served as a support person: I sat on one of the four chairs that faced each other and held hands with the two mediums of incorporation, who in turn held hands with the other support person (or medium of clarification), who was seated opposite to me. This form was unique in the Spiritist centers that I visited, since usually everyone sat together at a table. However, because there were eight groups, probably no table would have been large enough to accommodate all of us.

The victims of spirit obsession filled out green cards, which had only their names and addresses on it, not a description of their affliction. We used the cards to summon the spirits; however, the spirit guides who summoned the spirits did not necessarily send the obsessing spirit who was associated with the green card. From the mediums' perspective, it did not matter too much which spirit the spirit guides brought to us, because the disobsession meeting was primarily a therapeutic session for spirits. The people who were afflicted by spirit obsession would be healed more through doctrinal study and the practice of works of charity, and there were separate sessions for them. By separating the afflicted and putting them in another room, the Spiritists emphasized a nonmagical approach to healing that focused on the inner spiritual state of the afflicted, an approach that was quite different from, say, the instrumental approach of some of the disobsession sessions I had seen in Niterói and Rio.

Each group treated three to six spirits in an evening, all of whom were spirits trapped in the lower zones of the astral plane. Agenor told me that they frequently used hypnosis to treat the spirits, and sometimes they had to regress the spirits who had traumatic memories. He told me they had used regression for years, long before the Californians' past-lives therapies had become popular.

I observed several types of spirits being received in the dis-

obsession sessions, and in some of the cases the relations with the spirits showed something of what Spiritists thought about other, non-Spiritist mediums. In one session, for example, a medium in another group received two spirits that were characteristic of Umbanda. Dona Regina convinced one spirit to let the higher spirits take it to a spirit school and the other to a spiritual hospital, two solutions that clearly suggested Spiritists' view of the proper place for Umbanda spirits.

In another session the spirit was a victim of "black magic." The case was deemed strong enough that Dona Regina was called in to take care of her; she knocked on a chair, hissed, and sent charges into the medium's feet. Then she took off seven invisible capes and seven invisible collars, signs of spiritual subjugation by an evil spirit. The evil spirit, evidently linked to Quimbanda black magic, was very powerful, but not as powerful as Dona Regina and her spirit guides. Dona Regina was indeed a powerful figure. In another case the spirit did not want to leave the medium and go back to the other world. The clarifying mediums convinced the spirit to leave for the time being but to come back to the center for more indoctrination, and Dona Regina raised the ugly specter of "compulsory reincarnation if the spirit did not shape up."

One of the "animistic" mediums—that is, a medium who was not receiving a spirit but merely acting out unconscious fantasies—was a young woman dressed in white, the color of Umbanda mediums. She was not a regular frequenter of the center, and apparently she was the victim of Quimbanda (black magic) or Umbanda—Dona Regina made no distinction between the two when she explained the case to me. The young woman had her shoes off and her feet were on the ground; Dona Regina explained that the evil spirits made her do that in order to link up with the negative forces of the earth. The medium acted quite wildly as Dona Regina treated her.

There are many ways of interpreting disobsession, and I have focused only on a few cases that show interactions between Spiritists and non-Spiritists. Just these brief descriptions show how Spiritist disobsession confirms an order in

which Spiritist mediums and their guiding spirits see themselves as more educated and more powerful than the spirits and mediums associated with Umbanda, Quimbanda, and African religions and magic. Furthermore, some of the lost or errant spirits were priests, intellectuals, or doctors—that is, representatives of other groups that were often competitors or critics of Spiritism. The disobsession session revealed the power of the Spiritist mediums, and it also revealed how, from the Spiritists' perspective, the other groups held seriously mistaken beliefs.

Although Umbanda spirits are more likely to show up in Spiritist sessions as lost or wayward spirits rather than spirit guides, it is not true that Spiritists believe Native American spirits are all backward. Spiritists reserve a great deal of respect for some Native American spirits, much as Spiritualists in North America do. However, they are seen as highly developed old souls who have passed through many incarnations. At the end of the first session that I attended, Dona Regina received the spirit Itaporã, a highly evolved Native American who had experienced other, more prestigious incarnations but who decided to manifest as an "Indian" as an expression of his humility. One of the seven spirits who direct the Spiritist Federation of the State of São Paulo, Itaporã appeared only through Dona Regina. That evening he greeted me and welcomed me. In a sense, then, this particular twist made the Umbandists look racist in comparison, because the Spiritists portrayed Itaporã as a highly evolved, wise figure, in contrast to the wild, savage image of the Native American in the Umbandists' *caboclo* sessions.

During my visit in 1988 I had lunch with Cleusa Colombo, a Spiritist who at the time was working on a master's degree in sociology at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC) and researching a student movement within Spiritism. She informed me that both Agenor and Dona Regina had died in the years following my visits to their center. They were both very gracious to me, and I hope this brief description of their work honors their memory.

Spiritists believe that a great number of the "perturbing" or earthbound spirits are victims of black magic, and as a result disobsession sessions frequently give a sense of how Spiritists perceive Umbanda and Candomblé. To many Spiritists, Umbanda and Candomblé are nothing more than hotbeds of black magic, and Spiritists are inclined to extend this interpretation even to the alternative therapies pioneered by the Bahian psychiatrist Eliezer Mendes. None of the Spiritists I knew would have anything to do with him; in fact, I even heard rumblings to the effect that he had "subjugated" his mediums through "black magic." As a result, my introduction to Mendes took place through other channels, via another American student who introduced me to a psychologist who had lived in San Francisco in 1968, confessed to be a bit of a hippie at heart, and had recently helped found the Brazilian Society of Humanistic Psychology.

Although some psychoanalysts and behavioral therapists pejoratively call this "third force" of psychology "California therapies," the humanistic psychologists were busy distinguishing themselves from a newer California import: past-lives and transpersonal therapies, which might be called the "fourth force," one that was often aligned with Spiritism. In contrast, the humanistic psychologist whom I met was more interested in bioenergy and the body, a topic that was the basis of his link to Eliezer Mendes. He kindly agreed to take me to one of Mendes's sessions.

By coincidence, almost as soon as I had arrived at the session, I ran into a Bahian Candomblé medium who had been a student in the course I taught at the Spiritist college in Curitiba. He looked tired, and he said he had spent all day working for Mendes doing *trabalhos* (trah-'bah-lyoos, or "works"). Usually the word *trabalhos* implies works of a magical nature such as countersorcery, but here the word probably meant something closer to the work of the session that I am about to describe. Like my student, Mendes was from the northeastern state of Bahia, and his "psychotrance therapy" showed a strong influence from the African religions of Bahia

and probably from Umbanda exorcism rituals as well. In fact, one might say that he had "upgraded" many of their rituals through a language of hypnosis and psychology.

As the session began, I found myself "jouncing," or jumping up and down on the balls of my feet. I was later told that jouncing could lead to trance, although for me it seemed to lead only to a charley horse. The music in the background was strikingly different from the classical music of the Spiritist centers; the samba rhythms were more reminiscent of the *batuque* music of the African religions. After the jouncing, we began dancing, and some of the people started twirling in clockwise circles, not unlike Umbanda and Candomblé mediums. Then we all lay down and the lights were turned off.

After an interval in which we relaxed, Mendes turned on the lights. We stood up and followed his instructions to stand in different parts of the room. Dressed in white like an Umbanda medium, Mendes then "hypnotized" the women, who, unlike in many Spiritist sessions, were mainly in their twenties and very attractive. When he "hypnotized" his female assistants, they fell trancelike into his arms. As they fell into his arms, the women bent their legs and he lowered them to the floor.

Mendes arranged the women assistants on the floor, with their heads touching heads or feet touching feet, like cutout gingerbread figures on a cookie sheet. The centers of the configurations appeared to be the patients, and around them he placed his helpers, who were referred to as "sensitives," not "mediums." During the next phase of the session, the sensitives shrieked when they "captured energies." (As one of them later explained to me, they picked up "subconscious energies" rather than received spirits.) There was no talking or indoctrination as in the Spiritist sessions; instead, one woman shrieked like an animal and showed her clawlike hands, while another cried and said repeatedly, "I want to get out of here." Their behavior reminded me of the Umbanda mediums who had exorcised me in 1983, and the animal noises and clawlike hands reminded me of the "elemental" spirit that had

appeared in Poubel's center back in 1983. A strong man controlled the shrieking women and gave them passes.

Later we formed a big circle and danced to the music, as if at a party. In my notes I wrote, "It's like Umbanda mixed with a rock party." After the session, Eliezer appeared tired and did not want to talk; many gringos had visited his sessions, and I was just another. The sensitives, however, were more friendly. They smoked cigarettes calmly and chatted, and later let me join them for pizza and beer.

COMMENTS ON RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Mendes's session interested me for two reasons. He had clearly borrowed several elements from Umbanda and Candomblé, such as dancing and other forms of physical motion, using mediums to capture spirits (or "energies"), and using samba rhythms in the music played. Although he was a doctor and used a relatively scientific discourse with terms such as *sensitives* and *energies*, he had parted ways with the Spiritists. Those Spiritists who were familiar enough with his practices to understand the parallels with Umbanda or Candomblé suggested to me that his sessions used "black magic." Yet, their interpretation missed something else that he seemed to be doing: upgrading the non-Spiritist spirit mediumship practices through a medicalized language that was capable of occupying the same plane of scientific discourse as Spiritist doctrine. It occurred to me that his scientific discourse made his therapy quite similar to that of Spiritist disobsession, perhaps too close for comfort. As I watched his psychotrance session, I had the feeling that I was witnessing the reinvention of Spiritism. In other words, by locating himself between the Umbanda/African religious practices and the therapeutic/scientific discourse of psychology and the medical profession, he had positioned himself in the same ideological space as Spiritism. Like Spiritists he occupied a position of mediation in the conflict between the elite professions and the popular religions.

I was also struck by the gender dynamics of Mendes's ses-

sion, but it was not until I was writing up the final version of this book that I began to see how the question of gender articulated with the race and class dynamic. The gender pattern of Mendes's session seems almost universal for Brazil and indeed for many other cultures (Lewis 1971). Therefore, while I had noticed the gendered relationships I had not seen anything particularly new or noteworthy in them. The image of Mendes's sensitives falling into his assistant's arms is similar to the behavior of the "hysterical" patients who fell on cue into the arms of an assistant to the French psychiatrist Jean Martin Charcot (Bernheimer and Kahane 1985). The behavior is also similar to that of the "obsessed" clients and the mediums who received their "obsessing spirits" (both frequently women) that I had seen in many Spiritist disobsession meetings. In the psychotrance sessions, it was Mendes's *female* helpers, not Mendes himself, who performed the squirming, wriggling, and other kinds of "hysterical" or "trancelike" behavior that accompanied the receiving of spiritual energies from the patient/client. Likewise, it was a *male* assistant who had the power and responsibility of controlling and calming the women.

At one level, then, the men were the ones who stood on the ground of reason and control, while the women were exhibiting the behavior symbolic of the irrational and "uncontrolled." Those patriarchal associations are fairly standard ones in Western culture. Yet, at the same time the division implied that women were the ones with access to the psychic energies of the client, and consequently women had a certain type of power that the male master of ceremonies lacked or at least did not show in any dramatic way. The pattern in Mendes's session was similar to those I had seen in several Spiritist and Umbanda centers. Many centers had powerful women mediums, but the men often had the role of "master of ceremonies" (or if women also occupied that role, as in the case of Dona Regina, then men were sometimes in some other position of organizational leadership). In other words, the women were frequently recognized as being very powerful mediums, whereas the men were often in the position of

mediating affairs with this world, such as relations with visitors and outsiders or control over organizational finances and bureaucracy. The outside world also included relations with Jesuits, scientists, doctors, and other groups, and thus it should come as no surprise that most of the Spiritist intellectuals were men. Of course, I am talking only about tendencies, or a tendency in the division of labor in the Spiritist movement. There are many male mediums, there are some women intellectuals, and women can and do share administrative power in the centers. But it did not seem a coincidence, for example, that the president of the Spiritist Federation of the State of São Paulo was a man and most of the other organizational leaders whom I met were men, whereas the powerful group of mediums were women and led by a woman.

Although I am pointing toward a complementarity in the division of labor by gender in Spiritist organizations, the complementarity should not be interpreted as equality. At one level Spiritists seem to sanction the equality of the sexes. For example, they believe that we sometimes switch sexes from one life to the next in accordance with the law of karma. Women may become men and vice-versa, and therefore in principle men and women are equal. Spiritists even say that spirits are sexless, because they do not have physical bodies, although it has been my experience that they possess a gender identity based on their previous existence. Spiritists also believe that gays and lesbians were generally persons of the opposite sex in the previous life.

However, in other ways Spiritism is far from recognizing the basic principle of gender equality. For example, I occasionally encountered long antichoice lectures, and one longtime Spiritist told me that most Spiritists were very strongly opposed to a woman's right to choose an abortion. Furthermore, at the very top of the hierarchy of mediums—the famous mediums who were known nationally—men again tended to predominate. However, more than one of the most famous male mediums were said to be gay. Thus, the contradiction of men at the top of a domain that is culturally connected with the female could be resolved by the top male mediums being

perceived as (or actually being) gay. In a sense, then, patriarchy could be preserved by putting the men at the top of the female order, but then constructing those men as "female" men.

It may be worth noting that even at the level of local centers and temples, there were often male mediums. Some of them were known to be gay or acted in ways that would lead me to believe that they were gay. For example, the father-of-the-saints from Bahia who had led Altamira's Xangô ceremony back in 1983 was so stereotypically gay that others commented on it. I would say that the majority of the male mediums whom I met were heterosexual, but often it was not always possible to tell, and asking usually seemed indiscreet. People were not very concerned about the issue, but it is also true that I did not feel comfortable going around asking who was or was not gay. Sometimes people commented in a bemused way on male mediums whose feminine style of behavior announced to everyone that they were gay. Other gay mediums were in the closet, but if they were accompanied by men or fairly old and unmarried, they became a topic of speculation. As for lesbians, I met lesbians in the university circles that I moved in, but I never met any apparently lesbian mediums, although I am sure they existed as well.

The topic of homosexuality and mediums has been noticed and discussed in the anthropological literature (for summaries, see Fry 1982; Matory 1988). The psychoanalytically inclined have noted that mediumship is considered a feminine domain because the act of "incorporating" or "receiving" a spirit is similar to the sexual act of "incorporating" or "receiving" the phallus. As the anthropologist J. Lorand Matory (1988) notes, a series of symbolic associations in Yoruba and Portuguese also link mediumship with the idea of subordination. For example, when the spirits enter the mediums, they are sometimes said to "mount" their "horses." In Brazil the passive sexual partner in a homosexual relationship is considered gay, whereas the active partner is not considered to be gay (as would be the case in the United States). Thus, the activity/passivity or incorporating/incorporated relation-

ship is a gendered hierarchy that is associated with the sexual act (see DaMatta 1986).

If one applies the logic to male Spiritist mediums, then it is possible that mediums who do physical effects such as surgery or materialization—that is, an "active" form of mediumship—may be more likely to be perceived as relatively masculine in comparison with those who engage in more "passive" activities such as automatic writing. Indeed, stories circulated about the heterosexual prowess of the gynecologist/surgery medium Edson Queiroz, and he was said to be married as well. Furthermore, during disobsession sessions, the medium who "receives" or "incorporates" the obsessing spirit may be culturally marked as female (or actually be a woman), in comparison with the socalled "clarification" medium, the person who "indoctrinates" or talks to the spirit. Clarification mediums do not need to incorporate a guiding spirit in order to perform their task, and they are the ones who use their logical and persuasive skills to convince the obsessing spirit to leave the obsessed person alone.

Although there is a great richness in the psychocultural approach to the question of gender and mediumship, the connection between sexuality and mediumship could also be explored at a more sociocultural level rather than a psychological or linguistic one. To use DaMatta's distinction again (1985), the house is traditionally marked as a female cultural domain in contrast with the male domain of the street, and communication with the spirit world takes place inside the "houses" of Spiritism and Umbanda. Communication with spirits might be compared with communication with one's relatives and extended family, and such communications are often mediated by women. (This is also true in other countries—who sends the birthday and holiday cards in your family?) In contrast, it is historically men who have mediated relations with the outside world of the street and nonrelatives (such as the business world, the government, and so on), a domain that is constructed as masculine in traditional Brazilian culture (and in many other cultures as well). Thus, in terms of these general cultural relationships, it would make

sense that in Spiritism women tend to be the powerful mediums, whereas men tend to hold the power in this-worldly matters such as finance and federation politics. Of course, my observations are general ones that focus on general tendencies or patterns of cultural symbolism. There will be many exceptions, and as the division of labor between men and women in the larger society becomes more equal, one would expect to see these symbolic divisions break down both in the everyday world and in the world of spirit communication.

In general the spirit mediumship religions seem to be a space of toleration of sexual difference in a society that may be relatively tolerant of homosexuality and admiring of women but remains thoroughly heterosexual and patriarchal. To understand more completely this cultural space, the question of gender in the spirit mediumship religions needs to be examined from the perspective of the entire religious system, which has long been recognized as informed by complicated relations along the triple axes of race, class, and gender. Since the work of Bastide and Camargo, Brazilian anthropologists and sociologists (e.g., Brandão 1980) have had the habit of looking at the spirit mediumship religions as a system that is structured by Brazil's complex race/class dynamics, but the gender/race dynamics also need to be incorporated into analyses of the system. Consider an almost obvious aspect of the polarities of the religious system as marked by race, class, and gender: at the European (white, privileged) end of the spectrum, the Catholic church hierarchy (priests, bishops, and so forth) is still the province of men. At the African (black, underprivileged) end of the spectrum, women are usually the only mediums (the mothers-of-the-saints) in the most orthodox of the Yoruba or Nagô Candomblés. Thus, in the most general sense, the Brazilian religious system might be pictured as having two poles—a male, European, elite religion (Catholicism) versus a female, African, popular religion (Candomblé)—with a variety of other religions in between.

Clearly, there are many exceptions and complications to this kind of picture once one looks at the religious system in any detail. For example, in the Candomblés there is the *ogan*,

a position of organizational leadership that often is occupied by upper-class, white, male patrons. Likewise, Catholicism is largely a women's religion when one looks at who really carries the faith in the home, and many of the faithful come from the lower classes. In a similar way, a closer look at the level of otherworldly beings reveals great complexity. The Catholic church's patron saint for Brazil—at least in terms of the physical icon—is a black, female Virgin Mary, and about half of the African *orixás* are associated with white, male Catholic saints. Furthermore, another inversion involves sexuality in the two religions: the "fathers" of the Catholic priesthood are unmarried (as are gay men), and the women of the Candomblés are referred to as "mothers-of-the-saints," a term that suggests procreation and therefore heterosexuality. Thus the white/male/elite versus black/female/popular opposition is disturbed by these crosscurrents.

In between the two major poles of this African-Latin religious system are Protestantism, Spiritism, and Umbanda. Protestants allow men to marry, and many denominations allow women ministers. Likewise, as I have explained, in Spiritist and Umbandist centers women are frequently recognized as powerful mediums, and they may also control or share administrative power. Thus, Spiritists mediate not only the race and class polarities of the broader social structure; they also mediate in the system of gender polarities as well.

SIXTEEN COWRIES

About a month after I visited Mendes's session, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with a person who described himself as a Candomblé diviner. The word my friends used was the Yoruba term *babalaô* (bah-bah-lah-'oe), but according to the anthropologist Edison Carneiro, the last of the true *babalaôs* of Salvador died years ago (p. 113). In Candomblé men were generally supposed to be drummers, although men were also diviners. This diviner happened to be gay, but I did not get to know him well enough to talk to him about his ideas

on religion and sexuality or sexual preference. We did, however, have an interesting conversation on some other issues.

Spiritists reject divination and the antisorcery rituals associated with divination, and they see it all as a dangerous practice that can lead to obsessions by evil spirits. As a result I was interested to meet a practitioner of the controversial art. It turned out that the diviner was helping a friend of a friend who had become extremely upset when she found, in the courtyard of the school where she taught, a *macumba* (used here to mean black magic) offering with her name written on a piece of paper inside a cup. She did not know who did it, but one possibility was a student who was unhappy with a grade. Why bother going to the Dean or having your parents threaten a lawsuit when you can leave a *macumba* offering in the courtyard?

The diviner threw the *búzios* for her, that is, he threw the sixteen cowry shells so frequently mentioned in the ethnographic studies of Yoruba religion. After reading the shells, he said he would do an unblocking or antisorcery ritual for her. Often those rituals send the sorcery back to the initiator, and usually with a vengeance. The diviner told her she would have to pay about twelve or thirteen dollars to cover the costs of the animal to be sacrificed. She later went ahead with the ritual.

He also threw the shells for me, and he told me that Oxalá and Xangô were fighting for control of my head. The shells also came up with "blocked pathways." I wondered if that meant I would never finish my dissertation, but he asked, "Do you have any bureaucratic problems?"

"My visa," I answered. I was having problems getting my visa renewed.

"I'll do a work for you for 20,000 cruzeiros (about $2.50)," he offered.

"I'll get back in touch with you," I said politely. I felt lucky to get off with the lighter ritual, but I was put off by the mercenary quality of his pitch. Perhaps the Spiritists' teachings were rubbing off on me. (My visa was renewed without a problem, but I also did not take any chances and went to the Ful-

bright Commission and received its help in negotiating the bureaucracy.)

We then talked about my dissertation. When he found out I was studying not Umbanda but the Spiritism of Kardec, he was a little taken aback, because he knew how opposed the Spiritists were to Candomblé, Umbanda, and especially monetary transactions. We then talked for a while about what he knew about Kardecists, and he admitted they did some good charitable work but he had never been able to stomach their long, boring, doctrinal sessions. They simply talked too much and were, as he called them, *donos de verdade*, literally "lords of the truth" but more loosely translated as "know-it-alls." While the Spiritists had rejected Candomblé divination as a dangerous superstition, the diviner had found the Spiritists to be stuffy know-it-alls.

SPIRITISTS AND THEIR OTHERS

As I worked to map out the ongoing dialogue between Spiritists and other groups, I found that conferences provided invaluable opportunities to see the ideological arena in action. As a result I attended as many conferences as I could, especially those where I could watch and sometimes be a part of the interactions of scientists, Spiritists, Jesuits, doctors, and other groups. The more immersed I became in this world of heterodox knowledge and religion the better I was able to perceive distinctions and understand subtexts.

For example, at one conference, the First International Conference on the Mind-Matter Interaction, held in São Paulo during the summer of 1985, I found a much more ecumenical atmosphere in which the old Jesuit/Spiritist squabbles were more subdued. In the same conference, I also had the opportunity to watch Brazilians interact with foreign guests, mostly Europeans and Americans who were known for their research in parapsychology or related areas. Although the foreigners were usually engaged in very controversial research in their own countries, they nonetheless tended to find the Brazilians too spiritualistic and methodologically

sloppy, just as the Brazilians often found the foreigners rather narrow-minded and positivistic.

In a conference held in October, the First Brazilian Symposium on Parapsychology, Medicine, and Spiritism, Spiritists attempted to clarify how they stood with respect to other versions of parapsychology and alternative medicine. Doctor Hernani, who commanded a great deal of attention and respect as the grand old man of the Spiritist intellectuals, discussed the issue in a paper titled "The Three Sides [*Faces*] of Parapsychology," perhaps an allusion to the three faces of Eve. He argued that beyond the "materialist" Soviet school and the "spiritualist" American/European school, there was the school of Brazilian "Spiritist" parapsychology. (The American parapsychologist J. B. Rhine had advocated mind/body dualism, and therefore in a vague sense he was a "spiritualist," at least in contrast with the Soviet school.) Doctor Hernani claimed to be neutral on the question of which school was best. "I'm neither Jânio nor Fernando Henrique, nor Eduardo Supplicy," he commented, referring to the two major mayoral candidates and the Worker's party underdog in the city of São Paulo. However, everyone knew that his loyalties were with the Spiritists. Indeed, in an article that he had previously published on the same topic, Doctor Hernani clearly advocated that international parapsychology take up the banner of Spiritism.

I end this section with Doctor Hernani having the last word in a translation of a fragment of his vision of a Spiritist parapsychology. In the article "The Three Sides of Parapsychology," he argues that parapsychologists should stop their indefinite repetition of ESP and psychokinesis experiments, which he thinks only "reinforce the evidence regarding amply demonstrated paranormal functions and phenomena." In their place, parapsychologists should adopt "the theory offered by scientific Spiritism":

> What characterizes the Brazilian Spiritist side [of parapsychology] is its scientific and humanistic aspect, based on the doctrine codified by Allan Kardec and complemented by information from the spiritual plane furnished through the mediumship of Francisco

Cândido Xavier. Without losing its rigorously scientific character, it adds to it religious and philosophical aspects, comprising a unique corpus in which [questions] concerning the nature of man, his origin, his place in the universe and his destiny play a part in this conjuncture. The Brazilian Spiritist [school] is based on an economical theory that does not require excessive and abstract hypotheses of complementary work. Beyond this it offers an immediate application to the solution of the most agonizing problems and anxieties. It touches on the question that is of very profound importance to man: in the words of [F. W. H.] Myers, it is the question of whether or not the human personality has some element that could survive the death of the body. To this question, the Brazilian Spiritist side, based on observational and experimental evidence of a rigorously scientific character, responds with an incisive yes. (Andrade/Blacksmith 1979)

1988:

SPIRITS

DOCTOR HERNANI

In June 1988, I returned to Brazil. In addition to seeing friends, I went to buy more Spiritist and Umbandist texts to allow me to complete some articles, and I also hoped to begin some case histories of poltergeists. The German word *poltergeist* means "noisy ghost," and it has become the term in English and Portuguese for the type of "haunted house" in which there are physical phenomena that the family attribute to an unknown psychic or paranormal source. Usually in poltergeist incidences, the families claim to hear raps on the walls and to see objects move and break, but they say they are unable to find a physical cause. Occasionally the families also claim to see fires or water leakages that they cannot explain. The term *haunting* is generally used for more long-term phenomena that usually involve sounds and sightings—such as voices or apparitions—that the families attribute to ghosts.

One reason why I was interested in poltergeists was that when families turned to help to exorcise their houses, the differing factions of the religious system were often put into play

in a dynamic way. Perhaps the most obvious tension was that between the Jesuits and the Spiritists. I hoped on this trip to move from a study of the theories of Jesuit and Spiritist intellectuals to some fieldwork on how they put their ideas into practice when called upon to exorcise poltergeists.

Like most American and European parapsychologists, Jesuit parapsychologists held that "genuine" poltergeists are caused by the unconscious psychokinesis (the Jesuits called it "telergy") of one or more persons, generally an adolescent who harbors emotions of repressed hostility toward his or her parents. In other words, an adolescent's hostility is expressed unconsciously through psychic energies that cause objects to move or break, fires to start, furniture to rip, and so on. In contrast to the Jesuits, Doctor Hernani, like most Spiritists, believed that although psychokinesis (or "animism") may be possible in some cases, in most cases with which he was familiar the modus operandi was a spirit, frequently one sent by a "black-magic" sorcerer at the instigation of an enemy of the family.

The mood of Brazil in 1988 was gloomy, a sharp contrast from the euphoria of the first days of the New Republic in early 1985. The president, José Sarney, had revealed his true colors as a member of the conservative old guard, and he had cynically abandoned his popular plan of wage and price freezes shortly after the elections in November 1987. The maneuver had fooled the people into voting for his party, and as a result his allies had a great deal of power in writing up the new constitution, which would shape the future of Brazilian politics until the next coup. The people, however, were not to be fooled twice, and in the local elections in November 1988, they voted in many places for the PT, the progressive Worker's party. Likewise, in the 1989 presidential election, the run-off campaign between the Worker's party leader, "Lula" (Luís Inácio da Silva), and the future president, Fernando Collor, revealed that the people consciously chose to vote against the old guard. Unfortunately, Collor turned out to be closer to the conservative old guard than he had por-

trayed himself to be, and he ended up being impeached for corruption charges.

During my visit in June and July of 1988, the dollar nearly doubled in value on the black market—a 100 percent inflation rate in just two months—and the government had to close down the black market. The crime rate was soaring, and drug traffickers controlled many of the large *favelas* to such an extent that the police—if they were not bought off by the traffickers—were afraid to enter those areas of the cities. In Rio, the people of Rocinha, perhaps the largest *favela* in the country, came down from the hillside and choked the major highway that connected the rich neighborhoods of Ipanema and Leblon with the equally rich suburbs of the Barra de Tijuca area. The people of Rocinha demanded recognition and police protection, and the middle class worried about civil war. To add to this already desperate situation, in July an impasse in the constitutional convention led to rumors of a coup.

"*As coisas estão milhorando*," Doctor Hernani said to me when I visited him in June. At first I heard him say "Things are getting better," but then he repeated the last word—*milhorando* not *melhorando*—which meant, "Things are thousanding." He then explained his pun: the crime rate, inflation, pollution levels, traffic—in short, everything—was growing by the thousands. It was his humorous way of depicting the mood of the country in 1988, and the situation since then has only worsened. (In my latest letter from Doctor Hernani, received in early 1993, he informed me that he and his Institute, like many Brazilians of the large cities, have moved to a smaller, safer city in the state of São Paulo.)

I was sitting with Doctor Hernani and an editor of a Spiritist newspaper in Hernani's office in São Paulo, and for half an hour or an hour we discussed the financial crisis and political situation. Then Doctor Hernani pulled out an early draft of my dissertation—written in English—and several pages of comments that he had written. That evening I returned with Doctor Hernani's comments to Márcio's apartment, where I was staying. Márcio, who had by then completed fieldwork

with a tribe in the Amazon, looked at my comments and was impressed. "This is the anthropology of the future," he said. "Your informants read your dissertation in English and provide written comments."

"You are a materialist," Hernani said to me, almost scolding, as he pulled out his comments. He did not go so far as to criticize what I had written, but he evidently thought that my cultural approach was equivalent to materialism. Perhaps his remark was also made for the benefit of the Spiritist editor who was listening.

"No, Doctor Hernani. I'm not a materialist. I'm just trying to write about Spiritism from a social science perspective. I am more an *espiritualista* than a materialist," I said, using the broader, ecumenical term that Ulysséa had also used.

"Yes, I know," he said, smiling. He then reviewed his comments, several of which I incorporated into my book *Spirits and Scientists*. For the most part, he corrected word choices or small details of interpretation.

When the Spiritist editor left, I told Doctor Hernani that I was hoping to research some cases of ghosts during my stay, and I asked him if he had heard of any new cases of haunted houses, poltergeists, or ghosts. He had not, but he showed me the manuscript of his new book about two poltergeist cases in Suzano and in Guarulhos, two suburbs of São Paulo (Andrade 1988). He said that of the one hundred cases he had on file, he had looked into thirty-two, of which ten involved what he called "parapyrogenesis," that is, fires caused by the spirits. He believed that cases of parapyrogenesis usually involve some element of sorcery, and his prediction was born out in a case I investigated in Rio later that summer.

Doctor Hernani then told me a story about a woman who had called him for help in exorcising a spirit. Just as I was anxious for him not to write me off as a materialist, so was he anxious for me to see him as not a dogmatic Spiritist. A woman from a laboratory at a local medical school called him about a poltergeist that was haunting their laboratory by breaking and throwing objects. He told her she had three choices. First, she could remove the "epicenter," the person around whom

the poltergeist attack seemed to focus. This was an intervention strategy that corresponded to the Jesuit practice and that of North American and European parapsychologists (see Hess 1988b). It was, however, problematic, because the person might be scapegoated and fired. Furthermore, in this case the attack did not seem to focus on anyone in particular.

Doctor Hernani then suggested to the woman that a second solution would be to try an exorcist, and he gave her the name of a Catholic exorcist in São Paulo with whom he was on friendly terms. Although he named a Catholic exorcist, in broad terms this strategy would include the Pentecostalist and Umbandist option. Her third option, he explained, was to contact a Spiritist center, which would hold a disobsession session. Later, she called him back and said that she had decided on the third strategy.

"The Spiritists caught the spirit," he told me, holding his hand out in front of him and snapping it closed as if he were catching a fly, "and he never came back again."

After having read this section, Doctor Hernani wrote to me a letter in which he clarified his thoughts on poltergeists:

> My experience has revealed the futility of recognized methods as generic solutions. Each poltergeist is a unique case. The method that works for one might not work in the next case. I've seen many poltergeists extinguish themselves spontaneously. Others have finally ended after the intervention of a group of Candomblé. Others were controlled by religious exorcisms or Spiritist sessions. However, the same remedies, when applied to other cases, are completely useless.
>
> I confess, with all humility, that I still do not know of an infallible recipe for the "cure" of a poltergeist case. It appears to me that the poltergeist ends its activities spontaneously, with or without treatment.

Doctor Hernani and I ended our session on a lighter note, exchanging jokes as we had sometimes done during our other meetings. (My favorite Spiritist sessions were always these *bate-papos* with Doctor Hernani.) Doctor Hernani was living disproof of the popular perception that Spiritists were humorless moralists. I remember once that I met him outside

his house, and he was talking to a neighbor over the fence. She was complaining about pain in her leg and asking Doctor Hernani what he would do. He said that if were his leg, he would consider cutting it off and getting a wooden leg—it was the only sure way to be rid of the pain! They both laughed.

I cannot remember how Dr. Hernani and I started to exchange jokes during this meeting. Perhaps he asked me if I knew any good jokes, or maybe he started with a joke and I then told him one of my own. In any case, I told him I knew a good joke, but it was somewhat dirty and possibly anti-Brazilian.

"That's OK," he answered, laughing and adding something to the effect that "those are the best kind."

"OK," I answered. "A man has died and gone to hell. He has a choice of going to the French hell, the American hell, or the Brazilian hell. He goes up to the French hell and reads a sign. 'Ye who enter here will be responsible for eating three plates of cow shit every day. Your beverage shall be goat urine.'

"This sounds pretty awful, so the man goes over to the American hell. The sign says: 'Rules for the American hell. Three times a day, you will be forced to eat the excrement of sick ducks.'

"He notices that there was a long line for the Brazilian hell, so he goes up to a guy at the end of the line—there were of course no signs in the Brazilian hell—and taps him on the shoulder.

" 'Say, man, what do you have to do in this hell?'

" 'Well, I'm not really sure,' the man answered, 'No one's explained the rules, but I've heard that three times a day, you eat the excrement of sick ducks, and then you have three plates of cow shit and you drink goat urine.'

" 'Well, that's as bad as the French and American hells combined,' the recently arrived soul replied. 'How come everyone's in line?'

" 'Well, you know, it's the Brazilian hell. Some days the shit

doesn't arrive, sometimes they forget the plates, and they never have enough cups and forks. So it ends up not being so bad.' "

Hernani liked my joke and decided to tell me another one. He may have been sticking to the theme of *merda* (excrement); perhaps this former engineer had decided to poke fun at Americans with his joke just as I had poked fun at Brazilians; or maybe he was making a metacommentary on my dissertation. In any case, it was a good joke and I've since added it to my repertoire.

"There was a Brazilian who was visiting Houston, Texas. One day he decided to get his hair cut, and when he entered the barber shop he sat down next to a sophisticated American engineer who worked for NASA. The Brazilian, who was in contrast just a hick from the interior, a mere farmer, struck up a conversation with the sophisticated American. The Texan engineer seemed to have an explanation for everything, and the Brazilian farmer eventually got a little fed up with the American's know-it-all-attitude.

" 'If you're so smart,' the Brazilian hick said, 'tell me this: how come when a rabbit relieves itself, it comes out in little tiny balls?'

"The American engineer who knew everything scratched his head, searched his memory, and came up blank. 'Uh, I don't know,' he said.

" 'And if you're so smart,' the Brazilian hick said, 'tell me this. How come when a goat does his business, it comes out in little round cylindrical turds?'

"The American scratched his head once again, searched his memory, and came up blank. 'Uh, I don't know.'

" 'Well now, I'm sure you can tell me this,' the Brazilian hick went on. 'How come when a cow does it, it makes a big round cowpie?'

"The American know-it-all scratched his head and admitted he didn't know this either.

" 'Well,' the Brazilian said, 'I'm afraid I have to conclude that you just don't know shit, man (*você não sabe bosta*).' "

In looking for cases of ghosts or poltergeists, I visited Gary Dale Richman, who was no longer a journalist and had instead moved on to a more prestigious, and lucrative, career: he was an astrologer, medium, crystal healer, and member of a controversial new religious cult that was spreading in the Rio area. However, he still had a newspaper clippings service, and he generously allowed me to photocopy any articles of interest. One of them, from the *Jornal do Brasil* (May 5, 1988) had the headline "Minister Doesn't Scare Ghost" ("*Reverendo Não Espanta Fantasma*"). The photo showed Nasser Bandeira, a Pentecostalist minister from Rio Grande do Sul, kneeling on the floor of a house with his left hand holding a *Bible* and his right hand raised. He was exorcising the demon that had been plaguing a local family with its poltergeist antics, which in this case involved throwing and breaking objects. According to the press report, shortly after the minister told the family that "the spirits of evil have left the home and that no other phenomena will happen," a fan fell in another room. The article, which had a somewhat jeering tone, reported that Bandeira told the family that "it was sometimes like this, because no remedy ever takes effect immediately, 'but the spirits of evil have already left these homes.' "

Since the other big ghost story of early 1988 had also taken place in Rio Grande do Sul, I decided to journey south to Porto Alegre, the capital of the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul, a kind of Brazilian Texas known for its independent, cowboy (*gaúcho*) spirit. I spent an afternoon with Reverend Nasser Bandeira, who patiently explained his theory and technique of exorcism to me. Reverend Nasser was a minister in the Four-Square Church (*Igreja Evangélica Quadrangular*), a Pentecostalist denomination that originated in the United States. In addition to his work as a preacher, which often involved travel and big services (some so large that they were held in football stadiums), Bandeira worked for a radio station and was actively involved in local and national politics. I include his ideas here in detail because they provide yet

another important perspective in the Brazilian religious arena: that of the growing wave of Pentecostalist ministers.

At the time I interviewed Reverend Nasser in June 1988, he was an alternate "deputy" (or member of the Brazilian Congress) in the centrist political party, the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, known as the PMDB. A newspaper report also stated that Bandeira was a PMBD candidate for the city council elections in Porto Alegre—which were held in November 1988—and he probably had a well-developed local constituency from his churches and radio audiences. However, Bandeira's this-worldly achievements had not translated into financial opulence. The minister lived with his family in a very modest apartment, even by Brazilian standards, and his lifestyle suggested an integrity I had come not to associate with media preachers.

Bandeira's party affiliation is of some interest because in recent years a great deal of speculation and research on religion in Latin America has focused on the impact of Pentecostalists and evangelical Protestants on Latin American politics (e.g., Stoll 1990). In general, the growing Protestant groups have played a conservative role in Latin American politics, so it was entirely within expectations that Bandeira was a member of the PMDB. At the time of my interview with him, the PMDB had a certain amount of residual prestige for its role as the opposition during the years of the dictatorship. The initials of the party served as a reminder of its role in history as the prodemocracy coalition called the "Brazilian Democratic Movement," and the party had led the transition from dictatorship to civilian rule during the early 1980s. However, since the transition the party had become heavily compromised with the forces of reaction. By 1988 the Brazilian Congress was controlled by the PMBD, and the latter had lost most of its political support for its conservative and ineffectual policies.

Bandeira was a well-known minister and exorcist both in his native state and throughout southern Brazil, as his scrapbook of newspaper clippings attests. When he asked me how I had heard of him, I showed him the clipping from the Rio

newspaper. He read it with disapproval, then put it aside and explained his version of the story. He had called the afflicted family at 9:00 A.M., but the mother told him not to come until 11:00 P.M. When he arrived, everything was on the floor, including the fan and the television. The press was already on the scene, and he suspected "sensationalism." He ordered everyone to leave the house, but the mother of the family did not want to leave. Finally, she left. Bandeira remained in the house for about two hours, but he did not anoint it with oil or pray, as he generally did, because he suspected a hoax. As he expected, everything was quiet while the family was outside.

Later, apparently after the family returned, he prayed. A short time later the fan fell, but a local journalist and friend later told the pastor that, given the L-shaped architectural arrangement of the house, he was able to see from a living room window through an open space into the window of the kitchen, where the fan had fallen. The journalist said he saw through these two windows that a hand—it looked like a young girl's hand, perhaps belonging to one of the daughters of the household—had knocked over the fan. Bandeira suspected that the family, which was extremely poor, had developed the story of the poltergeist in order to get help to upgrade and rebuild their house, and apparently their strategy was working.

We discussed the case for a while longer, then I asked, "Have you also been called in for other cases to do prayers and the like?"

"Yes."

"And were they all other cases like this, with shenanigans (*malandragem*) and sensationalism?"

"No, no, no . . . I've also treated serious cases," he answered. He went on to say that even in the case he had just described, he believed that "negative forces" were involved. The pastor then told me several anecdotes of his experiences with exorcism, and he proved to be a master story-teller, on a par with the televangelist Jimmy Swaggart. His abilities as a narrator were clearly one reason why he was able to build and

maintain such a large following. Unfortunately, the tape recording that I made did not come out well, so I have had to paraphrase most of his stories.

Bandeira explained to me that he did not believe in evil spirits. He only believed in manifestations of the devil, as the scripture teaches. He believed in the fallen angel theory of the devil, which he referred to as "the Spirit." The devil frequently preys on nonpracticing Catholics, who are legion in Brazil and often seek out Bandeira's services for exorcism rituals (probably because exorcism is increasingly unpopular in the Catholic church). In general, his method of exorcism was to have two assistants anoint the house with oil. They sometimes anointed the whole house, including the windows. He then told the Spirit—Bandeira referred to the devil as the Spirit—to leave "in the name of Jesus Christ." Nothing else was needed, he explained, just the word of the Lord. "If it is the Spirit," he said, "then it works. If it doesn't, then there's some other cause."

For Bandeira, as for most Protestants, the only justification for this healing system was the Good Book itself and faith in Jesus. Faith was really the key to this belief system, and it was so emphasized that Protestants in Brazil are sometimes called by the pejorative nickname *crentes*, or "believers" in the sense of blind belief or even gullibility. However, Bandeira was very conscious of opposing perspectives, and his anecdotes showed how he recognized these perspectives and encompassed them within his own Pentecostalist framework. For example, one anecdote that showed his perspective on Spiritism was a story about the ghost of Getúlio Vargas, the famous dictator of Brazil during the World War II years and also a native of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. A woman claimed to be able to communicate with the spirit of Getúlio, and the family called in Reverend Nasser to help. According to the woman's mother, she had actually met Getúlio when, as a child, she had worked on his ranch for a few weeks. Bandeira agreed that the woman may have in fact met the *gaúcho* dictator, but he did not accept the Spiritist interpretation that the woman was actually in touch with his spirit. Instead, he

told the woman that she saw only the devil in the form of Getúlio. They argued about whether or not it was really Getúlio, and then he told the devil to leave. The demon obeyed his command and left.

Other anecdotes revealed how Bandeira understood and sometimes even accepted this-worldly psychological and sociological explanations of possession. For example, Bandeira said that the only spirits he believed in were liquid ones, and an anecdote revealed what he thought of those spirits. One day a woman brought her grown-up son to be healed, claiming that he was possessed. The pastor told the man he was not possessed, and he challenged the drunkard to fight like a man. As Jacob fought with the angel, so Bandeira, a strong and wiry man of thirty-one-years (probably younger at the time of the story), wrestled with the drunk man and whipped him. "The spirit of rum beat him," he summarized. Later, the man's mother came to thank the pastor and to tell him that her son no longer beat her.

Another story reveals the subtlety of his ability to recognize that sociological problems are often expressed in the spirit idiom. One day a young woman attended his church and acted possessed in front of his entire congregation. His words of exorcism—"In the name of Jesus Christ, leave this girl!"—were not successful, so he had his assistants take her to his office. After the service he returned to his office and dismissed his assistants so that he was alone with the young woman. Once he was alone with her, he shifted linguistic registers from that of the pulpit to a day-to-day Portuguese, and he told her that he knew she was not possessed but that she could confide in him, as one friend to another, and in strict confidence. She replied that she believed she was pregnant, but she was afraid to tell her father, whom she was sure would kill her. Bandeira then suggested that she go to a doctor and find out, and that if she turned out to be pregnant, to stay with a friend of her father and have him tell her father. It was very savvy advice that showed the girl how to manipulate the patriarchy for her own protection. Fortunately the young woman turned out not to be pregnant.

Bandeira was also aware of the theories of the Jesuit parapsychologists. He told me that he had been planning to go to a town in the interior of the state of Rio Grande do Sul where there was a poltergeist case but that he had decided not to go when he learned that a Jesuit priest had gone there and healed the girl. Despite the Jesuit's success, Bandeira still believed that the cause of the infestation was the devil, not the paranormal forces of the girl, which was the theory that the Jesuit believed and that he claimed his successful treatment validated. The pastor told me that while he believed in "mind over matter," he did not think that psychokineses could be a powerful enough force to explain the phenomena of poltergeists. He had once seen a film of a Russian woman (Nina Kulagina) that shows her exerting a tremendous effort just to make a ping-pong ball move around on a table top. Referring to the case that the Jesuit priest had healed, he asked me: "If it took so much effort for a mind of a gifted psychic to move a ping-pong ball around on a table top, how could you expect the mind of a little girl to make make her mattress fly up and to toss pots and pans around?" Still, he added that everyone, even the Spiritists and the Jesuits, had helped a little in this case, since they also appealed to God for help.

In other cases, those that were to him the most impressive, the devil openly represented himself. Reverend Nasser gave me two examples, the first of which he said was the most impressive of his career. It occurred when he was very young and was just at the beginning of his ministry. This story gives some sense of the gripping nature of the Pentecostalist minister's story-telling ability. The repetitive structures and authoritative suggestions reminiscent of hypnosis work not only on the possessed woman, whom he healed, but also on the skeptical listener, whom he is attempting to persuade.

He had heard of the woman possessed by a thousand demons, but he had not volunteered his services, perhaps because he was somewhat afraid. Nevertheless, when he was called, he went. He found her in her room, standing on the bed. "Leave here," he yelled at the woman, "in the name of Jesus Christ." The Spirit left the woman and entered the pet

dog that was also in the room. "No, I wouldn't exactly say it left the woman," he corrected himself, "but it also entered the dog." The dog, usually a docile family pet, began to attack Reverend Nasser viciously. He commanded the Spirit to leave the dog, and the dog grew gentle again. When the minister returned his attention to the woman, she was very possessed. Her chin had disappeared into her face, her eyes were bulging out, and blood was coming out of her mouth.

"We are seven," she said.

"How many?" he asked.

"Seven."

"How many really?"

"Seven."

"Seven's nothing," he said, confidently.

"I'm going to call another hundred," she said.

"A hundred's nothing."

"Now I'm going to call a thousand."

"Wowy-zowy (*puxa vida*)," he said, mockingly. "Now you have a thousand. But even a thousand is nothing. Do you know who is at my side? Look at my side." At first the woman would not look, but then she looked. "And who is with me?"

"I won't say," she answered in a man's voice. Finally, she said the words: "Jesus Christ."

"That's right. And Jesus will conquer one devil. He'll conquer seven devils, just as he'll conquer a hundred, a thousand, and all the devils." As a result of his intervention, Bandeira concluded, the woman was healed.

In a similar case that occurred in 1987, Reverend Nasser told of a mother who brought her daughter, who was suffering from stigmata-like bleeding attacks, to him. The daughter bled from the ears, fingernails, toenails, and navel. When he first heard the story, Bandeira said, he was doubtful and skeptical. The mother brought her daughter to the church, and in front of the congregation the minister commanded her to bleed, expecting nothing to happen. First, a big splotch of blood came from her ears. He still believed it was "sensationalism" or trickery. Then he commanded the devil to make the blood come out of her mouth, and blood flowed from her mouth.

He commanded her to raise her hands, and the blood continued to drip. He then deepened the level of his commands and told her to bleed from the navel, which she did. He noticed that his congregation was upset and that children were crying. "It looked like hell itself had descended," he summarized. So he commanded the devil to leave, and the evil one disappeared and never came back again. She has been fine since this exorcism, Reverend Nasser told me, and she continues to attend the church about once a month.

Bandeira's series of anecdotes reveals a system that includes and encompasses other positions. For example, he tells of four cases of possession, two of which were ersatz and two genuine. In the genuine cases, exorcism works; in the ersatz cases other methods, more secular and psychotherapeutic in nature, work as well. It appears that Bandeira defines a successful case tautologically: if exorcism works, it is the Spirit; if it does not, it is not the Spirit. However, there are also phenomenological differences between the cases of ersatz and genuine possession. In the two cases of what Bandeira considers genuine possession and successful exorcism, he also describes signs of extraordinary phenomena, such as the girl's stigmatalike bleeding and the woman's changed physiognomy. In contrast, the extraordinary signs are missing in the cases of ersatz possession. The signs of the extraordinary or paranormal help to elevate Bandeira's own discourse into a kind of metadiscourse: a victim may show signs of true possession, and when these signs are present, only faith and exorcism will work.

CRISTINA AND PADRE EDVINO

Gary's collection of newspaper clippings included several articles about a thirteen-year-old girl whom I shall call "Cristina." In April 1988, she began to receive nationwide media attention as the "paranormal girl." Several newspapers and the television program "*Fantástico*" ran stories about her, and within a few weeks the daughter of a farming family from the

interior of Rio Grande do Sul had become a bit of a national celebrity.

Most of the newspaper accounts described the work of Padre Edvino Friderichs, S. J., a resident of the Anchieta School of Porto Alegre, and, like Cristina, of German descent. Most of the newspaper accounts told the story from his perspective, and the quotations of Friderichs made it clear that the Jesuit parapsychologist saw his successful treatment of the afflicted family as the triumph of science over superstition. According to Padre Friderichs, the infested house was easily explained as an expression of Cristina's psychic energies, not as the work of a spirit or the devil. In contrast to the reporting of the commercial press, a Spiritist newspaper ran a long story describing the haunted house as in a condition of "spiritual invasion" that, of course, confirmed Spiritist doctrine. Thus, once again, the poltergeist attack was serving as a site for the interaction and even conflict of positions in the religious arena.

My plan was to establish a tie first with Padre Edvino and then to see if he might facilitate an introduction to Cristina's family. On Tuesday afternoon, June 19, I arrived at the Anchieta School in Porto Alegre, where I met Padre Edvino, whom I had telephoned earlier from Rio. An older man who walked with a cane and a bandage over his foot, he had been having some bad luck in the last couple of weeks: he had lost a tooth and broken his left ankle. He looked very much like a Brazilian of German descent, and he spoke Portuguese so strongly flavored by the German crispness of the interior *gaúcho* accent that at first I thought he was a foreigner.

A kind, gentle, and humble man, Padre Edvino enjoyed his work. Much of what he did was relaxation treatments for cases of depression; his "exorcisms" won him fame but they were not the mainstay of his work. In a self-deprecating, no-one-believes-me-and-I-don't-really-believe-it-myself manner, he told me he believed he was a healer, and he showed me a piece of filet mignon that he had "mummified" after one week of laying on of hands. He said he had healed others, including a woman with varicose veins in the calf of her leg.

At lunch with the other Jesuit priests in the cafeteria of the dormitory, Friderichs informed me that, by fortuitous coincidence, Cristina's family was travelling to Porto Alegre the next day for another treatment. As I later learned from Cristina's mother, their house had been quiet for over a month after the padre's first treatments in late April, but after little more than a month's respite a group of university psychology students paid a visit to the family and asked if they could interview Cristina for a psychology project. The parents consented, and after the students left, the spirit reappeared and became considerably more violent. As a result the mayor of the town had dispatched a driver to take the family to Porto Alegre to have another session with the Jesuit priest.

The return of the poltergeist attack was a setback for the padre, and to a certain extent his reputation was on the line. Although he scoffed at the press, which called him an "exorcist," he was also concerned that a failure in such a highly publicized case would reflect poorly on his efforts to enlighten the Brazilian people and turn them away from their superstitions. He told me that he had cured many cases of haunted houses, but this case was his first failure. The coincidence of my arrival and that of Cristina's was therefore a double stroke of good luck: for me it provided a means to talk to the family and to get to know them over a two-day period, and for the padre it gave him the support of someone with whom he could talk about the case.

I was apparently the first American researcher who had read his works and come to visit him, and my interest helped bolster his standing among his Jesuit colleagues in the dormitory where they lived, some of whom snickered at his interest in parapsychology. He asked me if he could present me to his peers as a parapsychologist, but I reminded him that I was an anthropologist (which apparently did not make a lot of sense to him, perhaps because he had an image of anthropologists as people who dig up bones and pottery). We agreed on the terms *researcher* (*pesquisador*) and *someone who studies parapsychology* (*estudioso de parapsicologia*). The latter term satisfied

us both since it could be interpreted as studying either parapsychology or parapsychologists.

During our lunch conversation, the padre showed me a copy of *Newsweek* that contained a story about the American skeptic and stage magician James "the Amazing" Randi. Padre Edvino was intrigued by the magician, whom he admired as a debunker of superstition, a role similar to that of the Jesuit parapsychologists in Brazil. Edvino was somewhat surprised when I told him that Randi included parapsychology among the superstitions he debunked. He asked me to translate the article, and I wrote out a translation while everyone took their afternoon siesta.

I spent the remainder of Tuesday afternoon talking with Padre Edvino and discussing his theories and treatments of spirit infestation. He followed his teacher, Padre Oscar González Quevedo, S.J., the same Jesuit whom I had met back in 1983. The Jesuit parapsychologists argued that when "normal" explanations such as pranks or fraud were ruled out, poltergeist attacks could be explained by "telergy," an unknown bioenergy generated by the agent of the poltergeist attack, frequently adolescents. When I asked Friderichs what he thought about demonic possession, the issue that had led the Catholic hierarchy to silence Quevedo, he answered astutely that it was exceedingly rare (*rarissimo*), of the order of once or twice a century.

To explain his own position better, Padre Edvino gave me a copy of his book *Haunted Houses* (1980) and told me that its title was a concession to the publisher. "There are no haunted houses," he told me, "only haunted people." The priest's treatment was based on the telergic theory and focused on helping the afflicted person to be more relaxed. He usually provided his clients with one or more half-hour sessions of guided relaxation. When he judged that his clients had achieved a suitable level of relaxation and hypnotic suggestibility, he gave them suggestions that they would feel relaxed and happy and, in the case of infestations, that they would no longer produce the phenomena.

My own approach to the case was somewhat different. My

training in social/cultural anthropology had led me to find the question of meaning and motivations—the way the afflicted view their problem—more interesting than whether Cristina's ghost was "really" telergy, a secondary personality, an ornery tricksterish side of her personality, or some kind of spirit. Whatever the mechanism through which the infestation took place, I believed that it had some meaning for her and served some kind of useful purpose in her life. It was this meaning and motivation that I hoped to understand.

Padre Edvino, however, was less inclined toward pscyhocultural approaches. When I described from that perspective another case I had read about, he did not seem to be interested. Instead, he kept coming back to the phrase: "This girl just doesn't want to be cured." Nevertheless, he gave me a carte-blanche to talk with the family and to provide him and the family with whatever ideas I might have.

The Jesuit priest then took me into his office and pulled out his record of the Cristina case. As if he were a doctor reviewing a case with a colleague, he read out her biographical background to me: address, age (thirteen), school (primary), telephone number (none), religion (Protestant). Then he read a list of the events that had plagued the family during the last week:

1. chairs moved;
2. a bucket of water rose up, turned over, and spilled;
3. first a knife fell on her chest;
4. then a pair of scissors flew and fell on her chest;
5. the following night, a table knife also fell, and there were also scratchings and blows on the wall;
6. the next night, a pair of scissors and a knife fell beside her on top of the mattress (to her left), making a cross shape;
7. the following night there were no events.

In a clinical tone, the padre told me that the phenomena were considerably more violent than they had been before his successful session with Cristina in April.

I met Cristina and her parents on the next afternoon. When I arrived, she was already sitting in the sun with her parents and Padre Edvino. The weather in Porto Alegre had

been cold, but on Wednesday the sun had come out and the temperature was considerably warmer. Cristina was taller than I had expected. Although she was only thirteen, her height, lipstick and nail polish, fashionable blue jeans and sandals, and somewhat bored, somewhat defiant eyes indicated that she saw herself not as a child but as a young woman.

I greeted Cristina, then shook hands with her father, her mother, and Padre Edvino. Cristina's appearance contrasted sharply with that of her parents, poor farmers who had spent their entire life on or near their farm outside a small town in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul. Cristina and her parents had never been to Porto Alegre before; they were, as Padre Edvino told me the day before, very simple folk, but good-hearted. They were Lutherans and, like the Jesuit priest and me (Pennsylvania Dutch on my father's side), offspring of German immigrants who had come to the New World in search of a better life.

The sun grew warm, so we went inside the dormitory, where it was cooler. We sat at a table in the lobby and waited for 1:30 P.M. to arrive, the time when the padre planned to begin his session. Unlike most Brazilians, he maintained a strictly German sense of punctuality. The family waited quietly and somewhat nervously, and Padre Edvino did not put them at ease with small talk. I asked him if I could ask them questions or if it was better to wait until after the session, and he said I should feel free to ask them questions. Soon Cristina's mother was relaxing and explaining what had been happening to them, going over the same list of events that the padre had described to me the day before. As her mother spoke, Cristina seemed to get a case of uncontrollable giggles, as if it were all very funny to her, and her mother laughed a little as well. It occurred to me that the girl might have been nervous, or maybe she had indeed faked the phenomena and she saw the whole episode as funny. However, the padre later gave me his interpretation of her giggles: he thought the teenage girl was somewhat "hysterical," and he decided to have a psychologist examine her.

At 1:30 P.M., we all went to the padre's office, where he

began his therapeutic session. A woman who had previously been one of the padre's clients joined us as his assistant and recorded the session so that Cristina would have a tape to play when she got home. Padre Edvino then placed Cristina in a big arm chair and gave a series of instructions: she should eat slowly, eat more fruits and vegetables, breathe deeply, do exercises to help the blood flow, and ask for God's help. Cristina was smiling during these instructions, and he noticed this and was not happy. He told her it was not funny, especially for her parents and the mayor of her town, who had provided the family with a car so that they could journey to Porto Alegre to see Padre Edvino. He then continued with his instructions: he made Cristina promise that it would not happen again; he instructed her parents not to allow any exorcists or mediums to visit; he told Cristina to help her mother at home; he told them not to allow visitors who speak about Exus; he told her to cultivate positive thoughts; and he told her to love God, "who will make the phenomena go away."

"After all," he said, "she's afraid."

"Yes," her mother concurred timidly.

Padre Edvino then told Cristina to breathe deeply and relax, to feel herself in a pleasant place, on top of a mountain with flowers and a palm tree, the symbol of the nobility of the soul. After giving her more guided imagery, the priest then told her that from now on she would be calmer, happier, and better. He told her to help her mother at home, to enjoy working. He then said, "The chairs will no longer move themselves," and so on for each of the events that had plagued the family, ending with the authoritative-sounding suggestion, "Things will not repeat themselves."

Cristina's head was turned and she appeared to be asleep, but then she "woke up." The padre went on; he was not finished. He told her to close her eyes, and he gave her more suggestions. Then he counted back from ten, interspersing the counting with suggestions that her bodily functions were going to work better: circulation, digestion, respiration, and so on. He then told her, "If you follow my instructions, you will be cured." His emphasis on bodily functions was proba-

bly related to the Jesuit theory that the poltergeist was generated by Cristina's "telergy." He ended the session by warning the family again not to permit any exorcists to come, because they would only make things worse.

After the session we learned that several reporters had managed to find their way to the dormitory notwithstanding Padre Edvino's request that the porter not let any reporters pass through the main gate of the campus. I did not want to be interviewed, so I made myself scarce. Later the padre told me that he told the press that the case was a difficult one due to Cristina's age: "She is very young and still has the mentality of a child, so she doesn't help with the treatment." He also told me later that Cristina seemed to enjoy the press coverage and all the attention.

Later Cristina and her mother retired to their room on the top floor of the Jesuit dormitory, and I went for a walk with Cristina's father. I wanted to win his confidence first, because I hoped later to spend some time with Cristina interviewing her without her parents around. I asked him what he thought of "the phenomena," and he told me that he had never heard of this sort of thing before, but he had subsequently learned that it was fairly common. His pastor and the local priest gave a parapsychology class together (as a means of combatting Spiritism and Umbanda), and his pastor had recommended that they see Padre Edvino. However, before seeking out Padre Edvino, Cristina's father first exhausted local resources. He tried a Spiritist center in their own town, but the mediums said that the case was "too strong" for them. Upon the advice of the local mediums, the family then visited a bigger center in a bigger city, but it was a long trip and very expensive, and the Spiritists' disobsession session did not provide any relief. A pastor from the Assembly of God had also tried an exorcism, but without success. Cristina's father then decided that he "couldn't be a monkey going from branch to branch," so he decided to stick with his own pastor's advice and seek out Padre Edvino. "Really, only Padre Edvino was able to help," he told me.

Everything was quiet for about a month, then Cristina's

mother cut her hand and a cousin (Cristina's father's brother's daughter) came to live with the family to help out. The cousin was a neighbor who had spent a great deal of time in the house, so her visit was not a great change of pace for the family. The spirit attack began again at the same time that the cousin left, but the father attributed the renewed attack to the visit by three psychology students from Porto Alegre, who asked to interview the family for a class project. They interviewed the entire family together, and on the same night the phenomena began again. Cristina's father's version of the subsequent events was essentially the same as the list that the padre had read to me the day before.

When I asked about the onset of the case, Cristina's father explained that the spirit infestation began in November 1987, and it was constrained almost entirely to raps, object movements, and breakages in their house. When I suggested that Cristina might have thrown objects around when no one was looking, the father answered that he had immediately considered the possibility at the very beginning. However, he was convinced that Cristina could not have tricked him and his wife, and he gave several examples to support his opinion.

In addition to the incidents at home, in school two cases of lost objects were attributed to Cristina, one of a student's coat that appeared later in the administration offices where, according to the father, Cristina had no access. The teacher wanted to dismiss Cristina due to the pressure of other parents, but the principal was a friend of the family and he stood up for her. Cristina's father also said that although his daughter said the other students did not talk about her, he believed they did. She was in the "fifth grade" (*quinta série*), which according to one of the local Jesuit padres, was usually for eleven-year-olds in that region, although in the interior Cristina was probably not old for her grade. Her father said that she was not a good student, despite what Cristina had claimed during the session with the padre. She had failed math the year before, and he believed that the infestation, which began at the same time as her finals, distracted her from her studies.

Cristina's father's first theory was that the infestation was

the ghost of his aunt (his father's brother's wife). This aunt had died before she told anyone where she had left her buried gold, so in December or January—that is, shortly after the raps began—he asked Cristina to contact her. (I should point out that the idea of a ghost returning to tell about buried gold is a common folkloric theme, but Cristina's father was sure that his aunt had really brought gold over from Germany.) Cristina saw the ghost, but at first she was so frightened that she ran out of the room. When her father saw how frightened she was, he told her to stop, but she went back in. The ghost told her where the gold was buried, but when Cristina's father dug a two-meter hole at the location, he did not find any gold. The ghost next told Cristina that the gold was located one meter to the west, but again the father found nothing, and at this point he gave up. There were two other unsuccessful attempts before he gave up completely: later a man with a metal detector tried to locate the gold, as did a dowser who used a pendulum. "I didn't believe the last guy," the father told me. "I watched him carefully and could tell he moved the string a little with his hands."

Cristina's father believed that his daughter was healthy in all respects. She had had two serious childhood illnesses and had begun menstruating at age eleven. Although Cristina had an older sister, the latter was always out working even at a young age, and she had subsequently married and moved out of the house. Her father believed that Cristina liked to be alone and did not like to have people stay with her. He also believed she had no sexual or romantic encounters, and later Cristina's mother agreed.

Cristina's father pointed out, however, that his daughter hated to do housework and that he did not yell at her any more, because when he did, "The phenomena get worse." She refused to do housework because, as she said, "One day I'm going to be famous." He said he felt powerless in his own home, especially when the journalists came. When I asked, he noted that Cristina liked the attention of the press, and when I asked if their attention might have fueled her dreams of being famous, he seemed to agree. He also told me that Cristina

liked to watch television (the padre had noted to me earlier that the girl "never misses the *novelas*," the prime-time soap operas that are the hallmark of Brazilian television). The television was, incidentally, one of the few objects in the household that had not suffered any injuries during the "poltergeist attack." We then discussed if threatening to sell the television might help quiet things down.

That evening one of the younger Jesuits offered to show the family and me the city, and we accepted his offer. As we drove down the streets of Porto Alegre, the family stared quietly out the window. Cristina's father told me he had never seen such a big city, and they seemed somewhat awed by its size. After visiting the big cathedral in the center of the city, I took everyone out to dinner at a *churrascaria*, the *gaúcho* restaurant that specializes in meat dishes served on a spit. Cristina's parents could not read the menu, and I—always somewhat culturally illiterate in Brazil—was not familiar with all the cuts of meat, so the padre ordered for us all.

The next morning (with a tape recorder) I interviewed Cristina's mother, who appeared to remember clearly the onset in November, when Cristina heard the sound of a piece of paper ripping under her bed. When she got up to look under Cristina's bed, it was not there. The next night there was the same sound coming from under the bed, and then on a subsequent night the raps began.

"Did you hear them?" I asked.

"We all heard them. All of us. If it were only she who heard them, we would have said that it was something like she was not in control of herself. But everyone who came over heard them. At first we didn't tell anyone, but then after three or four days we called the neighbors to see and hear. Each one of them heard it."

"Was she near the wall?"

"No. She lay in bed, held in front, and the wall continued to be scratched. Everyone went there and looked and held her hands, in order to see what it was. And so it went, night after night, night after night, always more, always more."

Cristina's mother then told how they attempted to com-

municate with the spirit, which they had decided was the father's aunt who had died thirteen years earlier and left the buried gold. After this episode, "It started carrying things ... it took the sink out of the bathroom, carried the broom, and broke china, glass cups, and plates. It broke everything in the house. Things flew from the table, but we never saw them leave their spot, only when they landed."

"And was Cristina seated at the table when this happened?"

"In most of the cases, she was always the closest. And we could take care that she didn't touch the things with her hand. But sometimes she pulled her hand back. We took care, but we don't know. But she didn't push or throw things (*encostar*)." Cristina's mother then showed me how sometimes her daughter moved her hands and the objects moved without her touching them.

We returned to the subject of the gold, and I asked how Cristina felt. The mother answered: "I think she was fascinated (*fasceira*) and wanted to see if there was really gold because she did not understand what kind of gold it was. She wanted to find out if it was medals or what. One said one thing, others said something else, so she wanted to know. And after everything, they [the spirits] said that it wasn't gold, and then they grabbed her feet, her hands, her head, and ripped the foam of her mattress, messed with her hair. So then she realized that it wasn't gold. So we took her to a Spiritist center."

The Spiritists in the larger city said that the ghost was not the spirit of the aunt, but instead of a man. "They said it was a different entity . . . a man with a beard who didn't say what he wanted." Neither the Spiritists nor the Protestant groups could help, and things grew worse and worse. "Things flew more and more and broke more and more. We couldn't even sit at the table and drink coffee or eat lunch. The table plates would leave. The teapot with hot water fell below the stove. But nothing ever hurt anyone. Things always fell and never hurt anyone. As so it went, and in the end she couldn't even eat lunch any more. If she picked up something to eat with, it flew off and went away. . . . "

"And how was Cristina at this time?"

"She was disappointed (*chateada*) because she couldn't eat; she couldn't eat anything."

"Was she upset (*nervosa*)?"

"Yes, she was upset. In the end we wondered how we were going to enter in the house to do the housework. So we sent her to the neighbors to play with the children in order for me to do the housework. . . . [The kitchen] was all dirty and all I could do was clean up, and when she was not there, I cooked. After everything I sat at the table, and she ate. We could eat, but only me with her . . . but if I took my eyes off her or turned around, then everything would start."

This last comment, together with Cristina's father's comment that he did not yell at her any more, suggested that there was a conflict between Cristina and her father, which was also the pattern in two other cases that I was able to research in detail that summer. The mother also stated that Cristina enjoyed the visit of her cousin, a girl about Cristina's age. According to the mother, the two cousins did housework together, slept together, went to class together, and in short did everything together. The cousin left the day after the visit from the students and the recurrence of the infestation. The mother now sleeps with Cristina in the big bed; Cristina and her parents share one room with one big bed and a small one.

Cristina's mother added that they had sent her daughter away on three occasions (to her husband's brother, the father of Cristina's cousin; to an aunt; and to one other house). Separating what Doctor Hernani calls the "epicenter" of the poltergeist attack from her family is sometimes said to end the spirit attack or infestation. However, in this case the infestation followed Cristina, and, as the father had discussed, even the local school had blamed missing objects on her.

The mother then described to me the most recent events, which had taken a violent turn. Knives and scissors had started to appear in menacing positions: a knife on Cristina's breast, a pair of scissors on her throat, two knives in the shape

of a cross, and so on. However, the night before they left for Porto Alegre, there were no disturbances, and during the night after their first session with Padre Edvino (while they stayed in the school dormitory), everything was quiet.

I interviewed Cristina next, but she was not very talkative. She appeared to be shy rather than intimidated, and she mumbled in a tiny voice that made it very hard to understand her. It is likely that my association with the padre and my prior conversations with her parents identified me in her mind as the priest's assistant, and it is also likely that a woman might have had better rapport with her. I tried to get Padre Edvino's assistant to talk to her alone, but she was unable to do so. Cristina's version of the story agreed in broad terms with those of her parents, but she seemed not to remember individual incidents as clearly. She said that when the ghost first appeared, "I asked her what she wanted, and if she would leave me in peace, and she said no." After her father's prodding, she then asked it about the gold. She now seemed to accept—at least partially—Padre Edvino's interpretation that she was causing the infestation with her own psychic powers, and she said that sometimes she believed she could make an object move by willing it to do so, but "sometimes I don't even think about it and it happens."

I tried to get her to discuss how she felt about the whole episode, but she was very reticent. She did say that her classmates came up to her in school and wanted to know how they could do it as well, so her poltergeist had earned her a certain status or notoriety among her peers. One friend also had a ghost in his home, which Cristina said occurred shortly after the apparition of Christina's great-aunt. She said that most of her classmates were also thirteen years old, except for one, who was ten. She had been held back a year at the end of the previous school year. In other words, the exams she was taking in November, when the events began, were the exams that led to her being held back. The events of the onset—the sound of the piece of paper ripping under the bed—now took on a new meaning.

In order to try to get a better understanding of what the

haunting ghost, attacking spirits, or paranormal forces meant to Cristina, I asked her what her dream was, what she would be if she could be anything in the world. She answered she would like to be an *artista*, like the movie stars from Rio and São Paulo in the television *novelas*. In order to encourage her to keep at her schoolwork, I directed the conversation toward what she would have to study to become a movie star, and I also asked if there was a theater in her town. She said there was not, but there was one in the larger city where the bigger Spiritist center was located.

Given this private dream, one can see how Cristina's ghost might have been linked to the world of movie stars. Although there was no theater in her town (and the one in the bigger city could be reached only by a prohibitively long and expensive journey), she had, in a sense, managed to bring the theater to her home. The padre's comment to me that she seemed to enjoy all of the attention from the reporters began to take on a new meaning. The reporters and TV crews were elements of a world that she had only experienced through her television set, the one object of the house that seemed to be immune from the ghostly infestation. Now a topic of national press coverage, in her own way she had become a star, as the "paranormal girl."

Cristina's ghost had opened up this world to her and brought her in contact with it. Like the ghost, this bigger world—which included perhaps some of her teachers and classmates at school, certainly the television *novelas* from Rio and São Paulo and the dubbed movies from North America and Europe, the Jesuit priests and psychology students from Porto Alegre, the buried gold left by a great-aunt who had been born in Germany, and now even an anthropologist from New York—this world probably intimidated her as much as it intrigued her. Her nail polish, stylish leather sandals, and blue jeans indicated that she saw herself as, in some sense, already part of that world, but she was also equally or even more a part of the world of the peasant farmers to which her parents belonged.

Cristina's ghost articulated with other realms of her life

where this conflict between two worlds brewed. The ghost appears to have been the envy of her fellow students: it elevated her in the eyes of her peers at school, the gateway to the modern world, the world away from her parents. Cristina's father also mentioned to me that she wanted to go to a high school in a section of town farther away from home than her present school. However, he said that it would only be possible for her to go to high school if her grades were good, which was not the case, at least at the onset of the infestation. Had the ghost in fact revealed where the buried treasure was, the family might have had the wealth to escape their poverty-stricken condition, and Cristina might have gained more access to the new world of the town and the new high school. Cristina appears to have lived to some extent in this future world of bright lights, big city; her father claimed that the girl said she would be famous one day. The obvious consequence for the present is that a future movie star does not need to perform mundane household chores, and some of the attacks began when there were conflicts over housework.

Whatever the mechanism one wishes to posit for the spirit attack—tricks, dissociated behavior, an unknown bioenergy, psychokinesis, spirits, or the devil—Cristina's spirit(s) could have served as an "idiom" through which she could discover and articulate a new part of herself, much as the anthropologist Michael Kenny (1986) argues that multiple personalities can serve as means of creative identity reconstruction. However, to Cristina the poltergeist was not an "idiom"; it was first a ghost—perhaps the demon or evil spirits—and then maybe some kind of psychic power she had hidden within her. I was well aware of the ambiguity: having psychic power was not necessarily an affliction; as her comments suggested, at some level it might also mean that she was special and that she had a future. If being a poltergeist-girl was, to her, not an affliction but a source of self-esteem, peer-group status, and even domestic power, then it was to some extent a tragedy that her parents and the padre had asked her to renounce it.

The history of Western, African, Asian, and other cultures is full of cases of women who are labeled possessed, obsessed,

haunted, or "hysterical" (Lewis 1971). The latter term, which can be traced back to the Egyptian belief that unusual female behavior was caused by a "wandering womb," is no longer part of official psychiatric diagnostic systems. Often the women (and sometimes men) who are possessed, obsessed, or "hysterical" come to believe the (mostly male) doctors and priests who label them as ill and perform rituals of psychoanalysis, surgery, or exorcism to rid them of their illness. In some situations, the healers are mediums—in many cases women mediums—and they may encourage their patient to turn the "affliction" into a "gift" by recruiting the afflicted as incipient mediums. In those cases, the power of the paranormal as affliction can be transformed into a power that grants the afflicted status, self-esteem, and social power. With these concerns in mind, I ended my interview with Cristina with a suggestion of my own, one that I hoped would help her to value her herself rather than feel guilty about her status as a paranormal girl (as the scissors and knives may have symbolized). I told her I thought she could now turn her power to curing animals on her farm, a suggestion that I had first checked with her parents to make sure they approved and one that avoids the legal complications of healing people. She talked about a parrot that had died, and the idea of curing her farm animals seemed to appeal to her. We talked about the idea for a moment, but then she was quiet again, so I really have no idea whether or not it helped.

That afternoon, Cristina went through another session of therapy with the padre. She appeared to cooperate, but in the middle of the session she failed his arm test for hypnotic suggestibility. Again, he said to me later, "This girl doesn't want to be cured." He told me and the family that he had done everything he could, and Cristina's father decided that they would return the next morning. I said good-bye to the padre, Cristina, and her parents, and then I left.

Cristina's family did not own a telephone, so I could not call them and follow up their story. Padre Edvino and I talked by telephone a few times in July, and he said he had not heard from the family again. "No news is good news," he said, "but

then I also told them that if the phenomena return, I don't want to treat her any more." One might argue that I should have followed the family back to their town, and it is true that it would have been interesting to interview Cristina's teachers, her fellow students, the family pastor, and the neighbors. However, it is also possible that, like the visit from the psychology students, my presence and attention might have provoked a return of the infestation, and it almost certainly would have generated more gossip and press coverage. The family had suffered enough, and to have their lives haunted by more questions of an anthropologist did not seem appropriate at the time.

In April 1991 I received a letter from Padre Edvino stating that since his session with Cristina there had been no more incidents. He said that a television crew from Porto Alegre had visited the family and confirmed her complete cure. He said he was relieved that his "scientific prestige" had been left untarnished in the public eye.

THE THREE SISTERS

I was able to see Hercílio, Geni, and their family on two occasions in July. When I came to visit, Geni prepared a huge feast, and I spent a wonderful evening talking with the whole family. After dinner Hercílio told me about his continuing work as a medium in Niterói and Casmir de Abreu, and I went over the manuscript of my book *Spirits and Scientists*. I had translated it into Portuguese with the help of the anthropologist Claudia Coelho, and I had brought it with me in hope of finding a publisher for it in Brazil. I had also brought with me some Quimbanda books that I had picked up in some bookstores in Rio. As a Spiritist-Umbandist, Hercílio said in no uncertain terms that no "serious" center would use the Quimbanda books, but he was gentler on my dissertation. He offered several corrections, mostly terminological. Regarding my interpretation of the book *Nosso Lar*, he laughed and said "they"—the orthodox Kardecian Spiritists—would not like

some of my comparisons between life in Brazil and life in Nosso Lar.

Hercílio's daughter Glaúcia, who had been getting interested in Spiritism when I left in 1985, was now working for a newspaper and being exposed to the thinking of the Worker's party. She tested some of her theories about American imperialism on me, and I believe I may have disappointed her by agreeing readily with most of what she said. Later she introduced me to her friend André Percia de Carvalho, a neighbor and psychology student who was very interested in parapsychology. André also worked part time for the Institute for Applied Psychology, the president of which was the daughter of a man who was, when alive, a good friend of Padre Edvino Friderichs. As a result, it was not surprising that André was less comfortable with the Spiritist interpretation of ghosts, poltergeists, and hauntings, and more comfortable with the view of the Jesuits and most American and European parapsychologists.

André was giving a class on parapsychology at a university in Rio, and he invited me to give a talk on ghosts and spirits. After my class, one of the students came up to us and said that she had seen a newspaper article about a family that was suffering from a spirit attack. The family had even sent out an urgent request over Rádio Tupi—an Umbandist radio station—for help from padres, mediums, pastors, exorcists, parapsychologists, or anyone else who was willing to help them.

The next day—Sunday, July 24—I visited the afflicted family at their home in a city located in a poor area of the greater Rio de Janeiro region. The neighborhood was certainly not a place for a stranger to wonder about alone, and I was fortunate to be accompanied by André and his friend Roberto, both of whom interviewed members of the family with me. As we arrived on the street where the family lived, I realized that by coincidence I had been on the same street in 1983, when I had attended an Umbanda session in the big temple located a few houses away.

The mother (age forty-two) of the family was a maid, and the father (age sixty) was a bricklayer. The oldest of the chil-

dren, Romana (age fourteen), was the mother's daughter from a previous marriage, and the mother also had two sons from the previous marriage, neither of whom lived with the family. The other three daughters—Rozilda (age thirteen), Rachel (age eleven), and Rosa (age eight)—were offspring of the present marriage. (The daughters' names are all pseudonyms.) The family members claimed that for more than six months they had been plagued by stones and bricks that fell on the roof, cups and plates that flew and broke inside the house, and outbreaks of fires. They also said that two bicycles had mysteriously landed on top of their roof.

According to a newspaper report published that week, a three-hour Umbanda ritual had been held at the house on Wednesday in order to cleanse it. Gypsy Guarapari, the spirit guide of the father-of-the-saints (the Umbanda chief medium who led the session), said that obsessing spirits were operating through the mother, whom he claimed was an incipient medium. To exorcise the spirits, one of the Umbanda mediums touched the mother on her forehead and absorbed her obsessing spirit, an "Exu of the darkness" (*Exu das trevas*), much as the Umbanda mediums had done with me back in 1983.

The medium was then tied to a tree in the yard, and through the medium the Exu explained to the father-of-the-saints, "The old lady who lived here owed me a debt." He was referring to the father's mother, who had died of cancer in the house fourteen years previously. The father-of-the-saints then convinced the Exu to leave the family in peace in exchange for some rum, cigars, and seven white candles. The Exu also demanded a black chicken, and—again, according to the newspaper report, but by no means unheard of—the trickster spirit then killed the chicken with its teeth and drank its blood. The father-of-the-saints also explained that a neighbor had performed a work of "black magic" against the family.

The newspaper report added that a member of the Messianic church had come to the house on Tuesday to pray for the family. However, the mother told us that neither the Messianics nor the Umbandists managed to end the spirit infes-

tation. As a result, on Saturday the family sent out an urgent request for help over an Umbandist radio station. On the same day the people from the Messianic Church came back, but their prayers did not help. On Sunday morning a Protestant minister came to exorcise the house, but his work did not seem to help either.

When I arrived with André and his friend Roberto on Sunday afternoon, the mother and her children were gathered out on the front porch with some of the neighbors, and everyone talked at once about what had happened. (The father remained in the back lot chopping wood.) Although the infestation had first started in November, the family had not sought any help until that week, when a friend of theirs, a journalist, sought out the father-of-the-saints and wrote up the story about it. The mother belonged to a Protestant denomination called the Universal church, and she had expected to get help from her church. However, she said, "They have abandoned us."

"They abandoned you?" I asked.

"Yes, since they don't come here any more. When they pray, then more things fall from above. And I'm the one who pays."

They then told us about the voice of a man they had heard, who said, "I don't want anyone here." It was hard to get a clear chronology of the events, but at one point the mother told us: "It started with fires. After the fires, it went to stones falling on top of the house. Then it started to knock on the doors and the windows, and the doors opened, the faucet turned on, and all of this confusion outside started. Then it started inside my house, and it's been going on like this for four months. . . .

"If I go to the market—I don't even go any more—I go to the market, with Romana, and put things on the table. When I look—where's the chicken? The package disappears. It takes eggs and throws them at people who are here. It throws everything. It grabs tomatoes and throws them on the street. Everything disappears. It takes oranges and throws them in other people's houses. It's like this, you know. We live here

without hope, not knowing what else to do. . . . Before it hid our clothes. . . . We found them outside, with different pieces in different places."

We chatted with the family and visitors for about half an hour, listening to their grievances, and then the three of us split up for different interviews. I interviewed Romana, the fourteen-year-old from the previous marriage; André interviewed Rozilda, the thirteen-year-old; and Roberto talked with the Rachel, the eleven-year-old. I also talked with the eight-year-old, Rosa, but she was very shy and I could not get her to say much. Her mother said that Rosa seemed to bear the brunt of the activities: "The little one always gets the blows . . . It beats her and socks her in the face." When I asked the girls if they ever had problems like this in school, they said they did not go to school.

I asked Romana if she had tried to communicate with her grandmother, and she answered, "In my opinion, no dead person's bothering anybody." When I asked about black magic, she said she suspected a neighbor, who was apparently jealous of the family because of their relative wealth. I asked Romana if they had found any packages of chicken feet or rosemary around the house (indications of "black magic"), and she told me she had found a package of rose petals on the roof. She said her father believed that the spirit infestation was the result of "black magic," but her mother disagreed.

However, Romana drew attention to herself, explaining that she "knew about the things before they happened," whereas her sister Rozilda did not. According to their mother, Romana did not like to do housework, and she fought with both of her parents. She also fought a great deal with her sister Rozilda, and whenever they fought, "more things [would] fall." Furthermore, Romana told me that she fought with her nineteen-year-old boyfriend whom, she added incidentally, she had persuaded to stop drinking. She added that she got along better with the animals in the yard, and she claimed to have healed the dog once and even to have healed one of her sisters.

Romana matter-of-factly described one of her feats to me:

"One day I was in a friend's house. . . . I wanted my mother to be with me . . . because if the lamps broke, she would have to come get me. The lamps broke. They broke here, there, in the room, here inside. So she went running to get me."

"So you're doing it yourself?"

"You think? Maybe it's my sister."

"Which one?"

"Rachel."

"Why her?"

"Because she's very angry, like me."

"Why not both of you?"

"I think both of us."

Later, she told me that she did not hate her sisters and her mother. "It's only when I get irritated. Sometimes they want me to do something, and I don't want to do it."

After I finished interviewing Romana, I talked with André, who was convinced from his conversation with Rozilda that *she*, not Romana, was the center of the disturbances. Rozilda told André that she sometimes fought with her sister Romana, and when her mother told them to stop arguing and one of them wanted to continue, then the incidents occurred. Rozilda also fought with her father, and sometimes she felt like hitting him. He often told her what to do, and she resented being bossed around. According to the other sisters, Rozilda sometimes threw objects at her father but said she did not remember doing so. She admitted that she frequently fainted, sometimes after she fought.

We then talked with the mother, who said that she did not think the household disturbances were the work of a demon. "If it was, the father-of-the-saints would have gotten rid of it." Instead, she said that the three daughters "form a very strong chain," of which Rozilda was the strongest link. She added that the incidents occured less when the three fought among themselves than when they fought with their father.

According to Rozilda, the infestation began in November, after a fight between her and her parents. She wanted to break up with her twenty-year-old boyfriend, but her parents were against the idea. (I was unable to get any more information on

the point, but the older age of the boyfriend and the parents' support of the relationship made me suspect the parents' motivations.) "On this day," the mother said, "the fourteenth of November [1987], Rozilda had gone out with a friend. The friend disappeared and we didn't know where she was. Then Rozilda disappeared. We called out for her and only heard her voice, but when we got closer, she wasn't there. . . . When her father got home, he was very angry, and the fight started. He beat you, didn't he, Rozilda?"

"Yes," Rozilda answered.

"He let her have it. Where did he beat you? I don't remember. She was very upset." I did not react visibly to this statement, but I remember that my blood ran cold when I heard it. How could a father do that to his children? And why were the parents' supporting relationships between these young girls and their nineteen- and twenty-year-old boyfriends? But the mother was already going on. She passed over the beating as if it were a common occurrence. "On this day," she said, "the beating on the doors and windows started."

Rozilda also said that she heard a man's voice say, "I'm going to take away everyone," and she felt a headache when the voice spoke. (Rachel, the eleven-year-old, also claimed that she felt a headache and dizziness after the outbreaks.) During the individual interviews, André asked Rozilda to draw a picture of their house and to describe it; and when she finished the drawing, he asked her how she felt about it. She said she did not like it. She also told André that their father sleeps in his own room, and in the middle of the night he sometimes yells out, "Mother! Mother!" Rozilda said that her father's mother was not very nice and that sometimes she saw her ghost. Rozilda was never very happy in the home, and even as a child she was prone to temper tantrums during which she broke things. Like Romana, Rozilda now believed she could cure plants and animals, and she also believed that when she was angry the plants dried up and died.

We also interviewed the father, who was very hard of hearing and seemed not to be able to understand our questions; nor were his responses easy to understand. He mentioned

how the "daughter of anger [perhaps a Pomba Gira spirit, a female counterpart to Exu] had caught their girl," but he mainly talked about how much they had lost and suffered. He pulled out a case with his glasses in it and said that his glasses had broken while they were in the case. This event seemed to him to be solid proof both of the otherworldly nature of the phenomena and of its evil nature.

I had hoped to be able to return and do follow-up interviews, but illness prevented me from seeing the family again before I had to return to the United States. André went back two other times, but no one was home on each of these visits, and later he wrote me that the family had moved away. The case history is considerably more confusing and more complicated than that of Cristina, both because the family members seemed to disagree about the meaning of the infestation and because the phenomena they claimed to have witnessed were so outlandish. I could explain the family members' reports in several different ways. In addition to the variety of explanations that I listed for Cristina's case—from dissociated behavior to the devil—I suspected that the children might have been using their parents' superstitions in order to control their father's violent behavior. I also could not rule out the possibility that the whole series of events was a fraud designed to get some money and help, or that the events were engineered by jealous neighbors. Of course, I would not want to rule out the family's own theory of evil spirits.

Because I was unable to observe the reported events firsthand, I find choosing among the explanations to be a matter of philosophical preference or religioscientific allegiance rather than one of inductive reasoning. I prefer to bracket the whole issue of explanations—the rather futile debate between defenders and debunkers of the paranormal—and instead to focus on issues that I was able to verify empirically. From that perspective, I was able to document with some success the question of how the reported events are linked in the family members' minds to their social relations and conflicts. What I can say with some assurance is that whatever the mechanisms behind the various incidents, the family members' dis-

cussion of the case reveals how in their minds some of the events were linked to domestic conflicts.

More specifically, and perhaps even more significantly, the mother seemed to link the onset of the poltergeist attack to an episode of child-beating. In another case that I recorded that summer, the ghost was also related to the violent treatment of a woman by her brother and father (Hess 1990). Likewise, Cristina had arguments and conflicts with her father, and although I have no evidence that suggests her father beat her, it is also true that it did not occur to me to ask Cristina, since she was the first of the "poltergeist victims" whom I interviewed that summer.

Only additional research could determine the extent to which there is a connection between domestic violence and poltergeists. Still, the similarities among the three cases seemed to me striking, especially when these cases of spirit infestation were compared to the huge body of case studies of nonceremonial spirit possession in the anthropological literature. In many of the cases, anthropologists found a close link between spirit possession and domestic politics, particularly conflicts along gender lines; occasionally violence against women and children is mentioned. At this point the research can only raise questions, but they are provocative questions that further studies will, I hope, address.

DANA

Toward the end of my stay in 1988 I made another trip across the bay to Niterói to visit Hercílio and his family. My friend and colleague Neila accompanied me, and she suggested that we also pay a visit to Márcio's parents. His parents were happy to see us, and we all relaxed and talked for a while about Márcio, with whom I had stayed when I visited São Paulo, and about our mutual friends, Bill and Monique, who were now back in the United States. Then the subject of Dana came up.

I had first heard the news in May when I was attending a musicology conference at Cornell. Roberto DaMatta had given a very funny talk on the Carnival song "Mother I

Want" ("*Mamãe eu Quero*"), and the festive mood of the occasion was heightened when my friend Bill walked in. The last I had heard, he was still in Brazil; I was so surprised to see him that for a moment I wondered if I was seeing a ghost. Although I was relieved to shake hands with him and hear that everything was fine, I was deeply saddened by what I was to learn later that evening. Bill was the unfortunate bearer of all-too-real sad tidings: Dana had been killed in March in a car accident in Spain.

As Neila and I sat and talked with Márcio's parents, Dana's name inevitably came up. Márcio's father, Zé Claro, shook his head and said, "This thing about Dana is very sad. It should never have happened." There was really very little else to say except to agree. It should never have happened. We sat in awkward silence for a moment, each of us deep in our sorrow. Teresa, Márcio's mother, pulled out a letter from Dana's mother who had written to say how Zé Claro and Teresa had been like a second family to Dana when she had lived in Brazil. But now that we were in this sad mood, we could not seem to find a way out of it. The mood was similarly gloomy when I got together with Márcio in June, and sometimes when I visited Bill and Monique over the next few years our good times came crashing to a halt when we thought about Dana.

Dana's death reminds me why I first became interested in mediums and spirits. I had been actively involved in leftist politics in the San Francisco area when I received news that my college roommate Ralph, who had been driving out to California to visit me and other friends, had been killed in a car accident only hours away from San Francisco. The shock of the event and the subsequent funeral reopened questions of ultimate meaning that, after a great deal of thinking during my high school years, I had put aside as unanswerable. Now, nearly ten years after my friend Ralph's death, it had happened again: another friend, another car accident. And still, despite all this time among spirit mediums and haunted families, despite all of this reading, listening, and watching, I confronted the great mystery of death with no better answers

than when I had begun. I just did not know anything (*bosta*), as Doctor Hernani so eloquently put it in the punch line to the joke he told me. When I think of these senseless deaths and their elusive mystery, I remember one of the poems I wrote during my gloomy São Paulo days and sleepless nights:

Scabies at Twenty-Eight

So I have shot my youth
stalking old texts in dusty stacks
and hunting down Third-World gurus
from Uberaba to Salvador,
and the game I've caught includes
a skin marred by Third-World disease
and a head stuffed full of Portuguese,
but still the deeper meaning eludes.

Spiritism is, to me, a beautiful philosophical/religious system, and I would like to believe that the world works more or less the way Spiritists believe it does. It is comforting indeed to inhabit a theistic world of spirit guides who watch over trajectories of personal development and purification that take place slowly over successive incarnations. However, notwithstanding all the talk of parapsychology and the "basis" in scientific facts, Spiritism has always seemed to me to require a leap of faith as great as that of other religions. From the Spiritist point of view, I am not as developed spiritually as I could be, and no doubt I am imprisoned by the biases of my American education and scientific training.

Nevertheless, writing about Dana at the beginning of this book was like mediumship to me: as long as my fingers were touching the keys, she seemed to be alive again. Writers have long been accused of having a peculiarly strong sense of their own mortality; I would only add that there is also a kind of magic in writing that allows the imagination to put death into suspension, if only for a short period of time.

Others had their own ways of remembering Dana. A friend of mine said that Dana's colleagues in the university where she was teaching in 1988 held a big memorial service for her and wrote several obituaries in the local papers. She had been

active in anti-Contra Central American political groups, and she had made many friends, as she had done everywhere she lived. Her closest friends and relatives dispersed her ashes in several locations, among them Brazil and Ithaca. Márcio and I sat one night in his apartment and remembered her to each other. He said she still had not finished her dissertation.

There is little I have by which I may remember Dana: a photograph of her playing with her crazy cat in her apartment in Campinas, some papers she graded for my first Portuguese class, and a mounted poster she gave me when I helped her pack her belongings as she moved from Ithaca to take another job. The poster hangs on a wall in my bedroom. It says "Night of the Samba" (*Noite do Samba*). Beneath the blue background of an evening sky are silhouetted figures, all dancing to samba and all equal in the blackness of the night. The poster reminds me of the New Year's Eve celebration on Copacabana Beach and the nights in Niterói when I fell asleep to the samba and *batuque* rhythms emanating from the bars and temples: samba in the night.

When I returned home from Brazil that summer, I found that Dana's poster had fallen to the floor of my bedroom. I taped up the mount on the back and hung it up again, but within a day or two the tape came undone and the poster fell again. I wondered for a moment if Dana had come back as a poltergeist to show me a sign, but after I closed up the apartment for the winter, her poster did not fall again. Only the wind?

GLOSSARY

Brazilian words often include the suffixes ão *and* inho. *The* ão *is usually pronounced "own" as in town or clown. The* nho *is the equivalent of the Spanish* ño *and is pronounced "nyoo." Likewise, the* lho *is pronounced "lyoo." Unlike Spanish, the Portuguese* x *and* j *are respectively equivalent to the English* sh *and* j.

African-Brazilian. My translation of the Portuguese term *afro-brasileiro*, meaning of or having to do with African culture or people of African descent in Brazil. I could have translated the term as "Afro-Brazilian," but I am following the new style of American English that avoids truncating and hyphenating the word *African*.

African slave spirits. See *pretos velhos*.

AMESP (ah-'may-spee). The Spiritist Medical Association of São Paulo, a highly influential organization of Spiritist doctors and other professionals.

Animism, animistic. Terms that Spiritists use for the influence of one's own subconscious over spirit communications or other ostensibly psychic phenomena. In other words, if the communications are not from the spirits ("spiritic"), they may be "animistic." It is a way that Spiritists recognize and use skeptical, psychological interpretations of Spiritist phenomena. Note that I have translated the Portuguese word *anímico* as "animistic" rather than "animic," because the latter does

not exist in English and might be confused with the blood disorder anemia.

Bate-Papo (noun, 'bah-chay 'pah-poo), Bater-Papo (verb; bah-'tayrh 'pah-poo). A Brazilian slang expression meaning "to shoot the breeze."

Batuque (bah-'too-kee). African-Brazilian dance.

Caboclos (kah-'boh-kloes). Spirits of Native Americans that appear in Umbanda sessions. The word can also be used for Brazilians who live in the backwoods, and it has the connotation of "primitive" or "backward." Unlike the dignified Native American spirit guides of American Spiritualist and some Brazilian Spiritist mediums, the *caboclos* whoop, yell, smoke cigars, and otherwise act out the stereotype of "wild Indians."

Cachaça (kah-'shah-sah). Brazilian rum.

Cafezinho (kah-fay-'zee-nyoo). Rich, strong Brazilian coffee, served in little cups with sugar.

Caipirinha (kie-pee-'ree-nyah). A Brazilian mixed drink made from lime, sugar, ice, and *cachaça.*

Candomblé (kahn-dome-'blay). Probably the most well-known and recognized of the African religions of Brazil. There are many types of African religions, and there are also many types of Candomblé. I discuss the most well-known, the Candomblé associated with the Yoruba (Nagô, nah-'goh) people. Its priestesses are called "mothers-of-the-saints." Because they receive spirits, they can be classified as "mediums," although generally the term *medium* is reserved more for Spiritism and sometimes Umbanda. The spirits of Candomblé are known as *orixás* and their temples are called *terreiros.*

Carioca (kah-ree-'oh-kah). Someone from Rio de Janeiro.

Churrascaria (shoe-hahs-kah-'ree-ya). An all-you-can-eat meat restaurant that is typical of southern Brazil. The waiters come by with spits of different types of roast meat and chicken, and they cut off slices according to the customers' requests.

Coup. This refers to the April 1964 military coup that led to twenty-one years of military dictatorship and ended with the birth of the New Republic in 1985.

Curandeirismo (ku-ran-day-'reez-moe). A Portuguese term for "folk healing" or "faith healing." The practice was also prohibited by a legal statute, and the term is frequently used in a pejorative sense to connote quackery.

Curitibense (koo-ree-tee-'bayn-see). Someone from Curitiba.

Deobsession. See "disobsession."

Despachante (days-pah-'shan-chee). A red-tape cutter, wheel-greaser, or semiprofessional bribesperson who facilitates one's manueverings through bureaucracies.

Dictatorship. Brazil has had several dictatorships. The most important in the twentieth century were the dictatorships of Getúlio Vargas during the late 1930s and the World War II years (see "Vargas dictatorship") and the military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985 (see "coup").

Disobsession. A Spiritist treatment for "obsession." Generally, one type of medium (a medium of incorporation) receives the "obsessing" spirits, and other mediums (mediums of clarification) talk to the spirits and try to help them go on to spiritual hospitals or other places in the other world where they can receive help. People who are afflicted by spirit "obsession" are encouraged to remedy the problem by studying Spiritist doctrine.

ESP (extrasensory perception). Anomalous communication, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition (premonitions), between organisms and their environment.

Exu (ay-'shu). A term for the trickster spirit of the Yoruba pantheon. Exu also appears in Umbanda, especially in the so-called Quimbanda rituals. He is sometimes associated with the Christian devil, and he is an object of some fear and a great deal of respect.

Father-of-the-saints (Pai-de-santo). A medium/priest of Umbanda and some versions of Candomblé. The father-of-the-saints is the head of the center or temple. Men are rarely admitted to this position in the most African of the Yoruba Candomblés; instead, it is occupied by a mother-of-the-saints.

Favela (fah-'vay-lah). Favelado (fah-vay-'lah-do). Brazilian shantytown, often located on hillsides and named after a flower that grows on the hillsides. A *favelado* is someone who lives in a *favela.*

Feijoada (fay-joe-'ah-dah). A stew made from pork and black beans, associated with the slaves and considered the national dish of Brazil.

Ficha ('fee-shah). The name for a token or ticket, often used for keeping track of people who are in lines or for determining who can and cannot be allowed to enter an event.

Gaúcho (gah-'oo-choe). Someone from the state of Rio Grande do Sul,

named after the cowboys who also inhabited the pampas of Argentina.

Iansã (ee-ahn-'sahn). The *orixá* of sensual beauty, death, and the wind, sometimes compared with St. Barbara.

Iemanjá (yay-mahn-'jah). The *orixá* of the sea, usually compared with the Virgin Mary.

Inconfidência (een-kohn-fee-'dayn-see-a). The unsuccessful plans for a Republican revolution against the colonial Portuguese crown that took place in Minas Gerais in the late eighteenth century.

Incorporation. The act of receiving a spirit into one's body, such that the spirit has control of one's whole physical apparatus. Because not all mediums "incorporate" spirits, I have tended to use the more generic word "receive" (*receber*) to indicate some level of communication with the spirits.

Kardecian, Kardecist. Of or relating to Allan Kardec, used in Brazil as a synonym for Spiritism when it is important to distinguish Spiritism from Umbanda.

Macumba (mah-'koom-bah). The term may be used very generically to refer to African religions in Brazil, especially in the Rio area, or even to spirit mediumship religions in general. The term is usually used in a pejorative sense, such as the way the words *voodoo* and *black magic* are used in English. The word *macumba* can also refer to a black magic offering or spell.

Medium. A name given to someone who can contact the spirits and relay messages from them. There are different types of mediums. Some see images, others hear voices, others generate physical effects, and so on. Some mediums "incorporate" the spirits; that is, the spirits are believed to take over the body of the medium. Others relay messages while in a semiconscious state.

Mineiro (mee-'nay-row). Someone from the state of Minas Gerais.

Mother-of-the-saints (*Mãe-de-santo*, my djee 'sahn-toe). Term used for a priestess/medium in Umbanda and Candomblé who is the head of the center or temple. Her assistants are called "daughters-of-the-saints."

Nanã Burucú (nah-'nan boo-roo-'koo). The mother of the *orixás*, sometimes compared to Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary.

Native American Spirits. See *caboclos*.

Neurolinguistic programming. A type of psychotherapy that has found support and interest among Spiritists in Brazil. The therapy originated in the United States and is based on a formal linguistic analysis of hypnosis, especially as used by Milton Erickson.

New Republic. The term given for the return to elections and civilian rule that began in 1985.

Novela (no-'vay-lah). A Brazilian-style soap opera that generally plays during prime time for two or three hours every weeknight. *Novelas* have a beginning and an ending and usually run for several months, but rarely more than a year.

Obsession. Spiritists believe that sometimes spirits remain on the terrestrial plane instead of going on to higher spiritual planes or becoming reincarnated. These spirits can attach themselves to living people and "obsess" their thoughts.

Ogum (oh-'goom). The *orixá* of war and fighting, sometimes compared with St. George.

Old black spirits. See *pretos velhos.*

Old Republic. Brazil became independent in 1822 through an act of proclamation made by the King of Portugal's son, Pedro the First,who inaugurated the Brazilian empire. Thus, whereas the rest of South America became independent through the course of bloody wars, Brazil's path was peaceful and "within the family." In 1889 Pedro the Second was sent into exile after a military coup, and Brazil became a Republic shortly thereafter. The period known as the Old Republic was an oligarchy, led by influential economic groups such as coffee planters, that lasted from 1889 to 1930, when Getúlio Vargas came to power.

Orixá (oh-ree-'shah). The name of the Yoruba gods or nature spirits of Candomblé. The *orixás* are now part of Brazilian national identity and are also part of Caribbean religions such as Santería, which are found in immigrant communities in large American cities. Historically, Brazilians have equated or associated the *orixás* with Catholic saints in a process known as "syncretism." The *orixás* can also be equated with the *voduns* of Haitian "voodoo" (or *vodou*), a related religion also of West African origins.

Oxalá (oh-shah-'lah). Leading *orixá*, frequently associated with Jesus.

Oxum (oh-'shoom). An *orixá* of fresh water and beauty, usually compared with the Virgin Mary.

Pai-de-santo (piy djee 'sahn-toe). See father-of-the-saints.

Paranormal phenomena. Phenomena that appear to be beyond the explanation of known science; sometimes called "psychic phenomena."

Parapsychology. The study of claimed paranormal phenomena such as ESP (extrasensory perception) and psychokinesis. Parapsychology differs from psychical research in that it is more restricted in scope, more laboratory-oriented, and more quantitative. See psychical research.

Passe ('pah-say). A Spiritist type of therapy that involves passing energy from a person and/or spirit to a different person. The person who gives the energy is generally a medium, and the energy comes from the medium's spiritual body or from spirits that work with the medium. The *passe* is accomplished by waving the hands over the body in a carefully learned manner, usually without touching the body. Thus, the *passe* is similar to what is called "laying-on of hands" in English.

Paulista (paoo-'lee-stah). Someone from the state or city of São Paulo. People from the city of São Paulo are sometimes called *paulistanos* (paoo-lee-'stah-noos).

Poltergeist. Literally "noisy ghost," this is a kind of unwanted physical disturbance believed to be of a paranormal nature. Usually, the poltergeist takes place in a home and centers around one or two people who are sometimes called the "agents" or "epicenter." Poltergeists generally involve what people believe to be paranormal phenomena of the physical order: object movements, fires, breakages of objects, raps, and so on. Poltergeists are usually of limited duration and are sometimes "extinguished" through exorcism rituals or other religious practices. Poltergeists are sometimes distinguished from "hauntings," which tend to be place-centered rather than person-centered, of longer duration (years rather than months), and mediated through apparitions, voices, and other ostensible visual or auditory phenomena rather than destructive object movements and fires.

Pretos velhos ('pray-toes 'vay-lyoes). Literally "old black," these are the spirits of Brazilian African slaves that Umbanda mediums frequently incorporate. The spirits generally give advice and consultations.

Psychic phenomena. See "paranormal phenomena."

Psychical research. In the field of scientific research that emerged in the late nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, psychical researchers studied mediums, apparitions, and other related phenomena. The British and American psychical researchers were generally interested in studying the phenomena to determine whether or

not there was scientific evidence to support the idea of life after death. However, the French psychical researchers were generally more interested in finding a physical force generated by the body. Thus the "life-after-death" or "survival" school (largely British and American, but including some continental Europeans) appeals to the Spiritists in Brazil, whereas the "nonsurvival" French school appeals to the Jesuits. By the 1930s the American Joseph Banks Rhine had led a change in the field toward "parapsychology," which tended to leave the survival question behind and instead to focus on the nature of ESP and psychokinesis among the living. Parapsychology has also appealed to Jesuits as part of their efforts to "enlighten" Brazilians.

Psychokinesis. Sometimes called "telekinesis" or mind-over-matter. Psychokinesis is studied by parapsychologists and is considered a type of paranormal phenomena. The Jesuit parapsychologists in Brazil invoke a related but slightly different concept, telergy, which refers less to direct action by the mind and more to a kind of unknown psychic energy such as a bioenergy.

Quimbanda (keem-'bahn-dah). A word often used to indicate "black magic" or sorcery. Sometimes Umbanda centers hold Quimbanda sessions in addition to their sessions of *caboclos* and *pretos velhos*. In the Quimbanda sessions the mediums receive spirits of Exu or his female counterpart, Pomba Gira, and the mediums give advice to people.

Sacanagem (noun: sah-kah-'nah-jayn). Sacanear (verb: sah-kah-nee-'arh), Sacaneando (gerund: sah-kah-nee-'ahn-doo). The term has a variety of usages, ranging from "teasing, pulling the wool over someone's eyes" to a sense of "foul play, dirty sex, lying, and cheating."

Salgadinho (sal-ga-'djeen-yoo). Pastries in Brazil are divided into the sweet and the salty. This category represents the salty type of pastry, one with a cheese or meat stuffing.

Spirit. Otherworldly being, in Spiritism usually a being that has spent at least one lifetime on earth. However, some people believe in spirits that have lived on other planets and others believe in evil spirits that have never been incarnated (called "elementals").

Spiritic. Of or relating to spirits. Usually the term is used to describe a medium's communication as genuine and not due to psychological projection or some other interference. See "animism."

Spiritism. The religious movement in Brazil associated with the writings of the nineteenth-century French intellectual and teacher Allan

Kardec. Sometimes called "Kardecism," Spiritism can be summarized by listing a few key beliefs: communication with spirits through mediums, reincarnation guided by the law of karma, healing through the exchange of spiritual energies (see "passes") or disobsession, and spiritual improvement through the study of Spiritist doctrine and the practice of charitable activities. Spiritists generally consider Spiritist doctrine to be a philosophy based on science and having religious or moral consequences. The moral consequences are generally considered to be consistent with Christian teachings. Some Spiritists consider their movement to be a Christian religion, but those who follow the teachings of Kardec closely consider Spiritism to be a philosophy with Christian moral implications.

Spiritualism. In the United States, a religious movement similar to Spiritism in Brazil. American Spiritualists tend to see their movement more as a religion, and they are more flexible or open-minded about the question of reincarnation. In Brazil, the term *spiritualist* (*espiritualista*) is sometimes used to refer to anyone who believes in God or who is not a materialist.

Spirit medium. See "medium."

Spirit mediumship religions. This is my term for religions in Brazil that have mediums, such as Spiritism, Umbanda, and Candomblé. In Portuguese, the generic term for these religions is sometimes "Spiritism," but I have decided not to use this word in English since it is already being used in a narrower sense. Spiritists use the words *religiões mediúnicas* (hay-lee-gee-'oins may-djee-'oo-nee-kas) as the generic term, and my phrase is an attempt to render that meaning in English.

Syncretism. The act of equating two parallel religious traditions, usually by naming equivalences between two sets of deities. In Brazil, the term usually refers to the equation of Catholic saints with the *orixás*.

Terreiro (tay-'hay-roh). Literally "open ground," the name is now used for the "houses" of Candomblé and some Umbanda groups. I have generally translated the word as "temple."

Umbanda (um-'bahn-dah). A spirit mediumship religion that in many ways is situated between the more European Spiritism and the more African Candomblé. Its mediums, or mothers-of-the-saints and fathers-of-the-saints, receive or incorporate the spirits of *caboclos* and *pretos velhos*. Some Umbanda groups also hold Quimbanda sessions,

in which they receive the trickster spirits of *Exu* and his female counterpart, *Pomba Gira*.

Vargas dictatorship. Getúlio Vargas became president of Brazil in 1930 through a military coup. By 1937 he had solidified power enough that he could declare a dictatorship. Known as the "New State," the dictatorship lasted until 1945, when the military forced Vargas out of office. Due in no small measure to his nationalistic economic policies and his paternalistic protection of the labor movement, Vargas remained popular enough to be reelected president in 1950. He committed suicide in 1955, complaining of "dark forces" in the capital. Generally, the term *dark forces* has been understood to imply the military, but Spiritists and Brazilian writers have sometimes suggested a more otherworldly interpretation.

Vatican II. A decision-making body of the Catholic church during the 1960s. The rulings of Vatican II made it possible for the Catholic church to adopt a more tolerant attitude toward local customs, especially in Third World and non-Western countries.

Vitamina (vee-tah-'mee-nah). A Brazilian-style milkshake, usually made by mixing fruit, milk, and sugar together in a blender.

Xangô (shan-'goh). The *orixá* of justice and thunder, sometimes associated with St. Jerome, although the association varies from one part of Brazil to another.

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