



FROM TRANSNATIONAL TO REGIONAL MAGNETIC FEVERS: THE MAKING
OF A LAW ON HYPNOTISM IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BELGIUM

by

KAAT WILS*

Research Unit Cultural History since 1750, University of Leuven – PB 3307, Belgium

In May 1892, Belgium adopted a law on the exercise of hypnotism. The signing of the law constituted a temporary endpoint to six years of debate on the dangers and promises of hypnotism, a process of negotiation between medical doctors, members of parliament, legal professionals and lay practitioners. The terms of the debate were not very different from what happened elsewhere in Europe, where, since the mid 1880s, hypnotism had become an object of public concern. The Belgian law was nevertheless unique in its combined effort to regulate the use of hypnosis in public and private, for purposes of entertainment, research and therapy. My analysis shows how the making of the law was a process of negotiation in which local, national and transnational networks and allegiances each played a part. While the transnational atmosphere of moral panic had created a seedbed for the law, its eventual outlook owed much to the powerful lobby work of an essentially local network of lay magnetizers, and to the renown of Joseph Delbœuf, professor at the University of Liège, whose work in the field of hypnotism stimulated several liberal doctors and members of Parliament from the Liège region to defend a more lenient law.

Keywords: legal regulation of hypnotism; lay magnetizers; Academy of Medicine; Belgian Parliament; Joseph Delbœuf; medical monopoly

On 30 May 1892, the Belgian Minister of Justice and King Leopold II signed a law on the exercise of hypnosis. The law prohibited public demonstrations of hypnotism and the signing of official documents under hypnosis, and it limited the right to perform hypnosis on minors and mentally ill persons mainly to medical doctors.¹ The signing of the law constituted a temporary endpoint to six years of public debate in Belgium on the dangers and promises of hypnotism, a process of negotiation between medical doctors, members of parliament and – to a lesser extent – legal professionals and lay practitioners. The terms of the debate were not very different from what happened elsewhere in Europe, where, since the early 1880s, hypnotism had become an object of public concern which could be described as a combination of hypomania and moral panic.² Since 1880, national, regional and local administrative bans on public performances of hypnotism had been pronounced in Denmark, Austria, Germany, Italy and France, in response to the shows of

*kaat.wils@kuleuven.be

specific itinerant magnetizers.³ The scope of the Belgian regulation was unique, however. It was not an administrative ban but a law, which meant that it was the result of a public and explicitly political debate in Parliament. Moreover, the law was much more ambitious in its combined effort to regulate the use of hypnosis in public and private, for purposes of entertainment, research and therapy, and in a context of fraud.

The analysis which follows will not take the uniqueness of the law as its main issue. Rather, it will show how the making of this law was a process of negotiation in which local, national and transnational networks and allegiances each played an important part. The debate was performed in institutions which were explicitly national in scope and reflected Belgium's ambitions as a modern nation-state, the Royal Academy for Medicine and the national Parliament. At the same time, transnational connections and references were of utmost importance. Each of the groups and individuals involved claimed expertise and authority on the matter. As elsewhere in Europe, hypnotism was increasingly explored and claimed by (part of) the medical establishment, which sought to demarcate it from lay practices and traditions. As a body of agreed-upon knowledge was lacking, transnational networks could help to establish one's authority. At the same time, however, the Belgian debate was to a large extent triggered and determined by one specific case: the position and fame of the philosophy professor and hypnosis scholar Joseph Delbœuf. Local specificities and networks turned out to play an important part in a national debate with transnational reverberations. Before exploring each of these three dimensions, this article starts with a short historical introduction on magnetism and hypnotism in mid-nineteenth-century Belgium.

THE BIRTH OF AN ANXIETY

Hypnotism was not an entirely new phenomenon, and neither were its denunciations. Animal magnetism had gained some popularity in Belgium's capital, Brussels, from the 1830s on, both as a method of medical treatment and in the form of public demonstrations. Since at least 1870, therapeutic magnetism had flourished in several cities, often – as was also the case in Spain⁴ – in connection with the spiritist movement which developed around the work of the French 'prophet' of Spiritism, Allan Kardec. Until 1880, these practices of magnetism do not seem to have given rise to broad public concern.⁵ Though municipalities had the legal ability to prohibit public performances with reference to the violation of public order, they did not have easy recourse to this measure.

With regard to the regulation of the practice of medicine, the Belgian state had set up provincial medical committees to control compliance with the law on the exercise of the art of healing which dated back to 1818, when the Southern Netherlands had fallen under Dutch rule. Any healer who had not studied medicine at university was excluded from the practice of medicine, and more specifically from the right to prescribe. The system was similar to the French, and diverged from the more liberal regulations in Germany and Britain.⁶ In 1853, the practice of medicine was further specified as the prescription of any 'remedy', be it medicinal or merely hygienic in nature, be it financially rewarded or based on purely charitable motives.⁷ This specification allowed for the prosecution of magnetic healers, whose therapy often did not include the prescription of medicines. In the few instances when magnetizers were in fact charged, complaints primarily referred to the general categories of unfair competition and charlatanism, while the scientific credibility,

the medical effectiveness or the alleged societal dangers of magnetic practices seemed much less of an issue.⁸

Notwithstanding these court cases, informal contacts and collaborations between doctors and lay practitioners existed, as was the case elsewhere in Europe.⁹ Some personal experimentation among doctors was reported on in the Royal Academy of Medicine, Belgium's most prestigious medical society, which had been set up in 1841 as a consultative body for the government.¹⁰ Clearly, doctors who testified of their experiences with magnetism were eager to distance themselves from lay magnetizers and their spectacles.¹¹ The topic easily aroused emotional responses within medical societies, often with reference to the French Academy of Medicine's disapproval of animal magnetism of 1837.¹² The question did not, however, provoke extensive research or theoretical debate. When in the early 1860s a doctor of some renown published a short treatise which described the therapeutic value of magnetism, but also advocated restricting its use to medical doctors because of its possible dangers in the hands of careless practitioners, his plea did not resonate in the medical press.¹³

In the 1870s, however, a new generation of stage magnetizers became popular throughout Europe. They used techniques of visual fixation and suggestion, and hence instigated a transformation towards hypnotism.¹⁴ One of them, Donato (a stage name for Alfred Edouard D'Hont), was of Belgian origin and started his first seances in the Belgian university city of Liège in 1874. A year later, he moved to Paris, but he continued to visit Belgium to give public performances.¹⁵ During the 1870s, these shows did not seem to raise broad public concern. In the general press, Donato's presentations were announced enthusiastically, as were the appearances of other magnetizers such as Franz Léon or the Danish magnetizer and hypnotist Carl Hansen. Hansen, in particular, became well known for his educational approach: his shows began with a lecture on the history of human magnetism before taking a theatrical turn.¹⁶ Donato himself invested in trying to prevent or overcome hostility from doctors. When arriving in a town, he invited doctors to an 'intimate research seance'. In 1878, he was reported to have organized such private gatherings in three Belgian cities: Brussels, Liège and Verviers, a smaller industrial town in the neighbourhood of Liège.¹⁷

From the mid 1880s, both medical and legal journals and the general Belgian press showed an increased interest in the topic, mirroring the increased legitimacy of the study of hypnosis in France, in the wake of the studies of the famous neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. They hinted at the therapeutic promises of hypnotism (defined as the modern, more scientific successor of animal magnetism, with its reliance on the existence of mysterious magnetic fluids), but also at the possible dangers of criminal suggestion and the immorality of public spectacles of magnetism.¹⁸ The first time that a link was made in the international scholarly community between the influence of the public performance of a magnetizer and a criminal case was in 1881–82 by the Swiss doctor Paul-Louis Ladame. He described how Donato's public shows in several Swiss cities had resulted in a 'magnetic fever' among the audiences. According to Ladame, people started to teach themselves magnetism, and this eventually resulted in a case of rape under hypnotic sleep.¹⁹ Ladame's claim was reiterated six years later by the famous criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso in Italy after Donato's shows in Turin,²⁰ and then from 1887 by Charcot and other members of the Paris School of hypnotism such as Gilles de la Tourette.²¹ In the meantime, another type of moral concern associated with hypnotism was gaining public attention abroad: the possibility of inciting people under hypnosis to

commit criminal acts. It was Jules Liégeois, the French lawyer associated with the Nancy School of hypnotism, who in 1884 first pointed to this danger in a report for the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.²² Though Liégeois himself did not associate the problem of criminal suggestion with the issue of public performances, his alarm cry certainly fed the scepticism of many against public performances, which were said to disseminate practices of magnetism or hypnotism among their audiences.

In Belgium also, criticism towards stage magnetizers and their search for ever more spectacular shows gained ground in the mid 1880s. While the tradition of some magnetizers to organize private sessions for doctors and journalists continued to be well received in the general press, the violent and physically dangerous aspects of some other shows were heavily criticized.²³ Outrage over some of these shows also constituted the immediate cause of the parliamentary debate on hypnotism. The issue was first brought up in Parliament in January 1888, a few weeks after a series of popular performances had been held in Brussels. In these shows, the French magnetizer De Torcy put his young female subject on stage in a cage with three lions.²⁴ Anxiety about the excesses of stage hypnotism now seemed justified.

NATIONAL POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES

This growing public concern about spectacles of hypnotism was not the only motivation for bringing the issue to Parliament and into the Academy of Medicine. The debate was to a large extent triggered and determined by the work and public claims of one particular hypnosis scholar, the philosopher Joseph Delbœuf. The discussion of his work, as well as its broader ideological and political context, reveals the importance of the specifically national scale of the debate.

Within the Belgian academic world of the mid 1880s, Delbœuf was the only person seriously involved in research on hypnotism. A philologist, philosopher and mathematician by training and a fierce anticlerical liberal, he had started his academic career at the faculty of arts and philosophy at the University of Ghent in the early 1860s. He became interested in psychophysics in the wake of the work of the German philosopher and physicist Gustav Fechner and set up experiments on optical illusions. Following accusations of scepticism and materialism, he was transferred to the University of Liège, where he mainly had to teach Latin and Greek. His interest in psychology remained alive, however, and, after work on sleep and dreams in the early 1880s, his academic interest evolved towards magnetism and hypnotism.²⁵ For the remaining decade of his life, he would become a passionate practitioner and theorist of hypnotism, experimenting on a variety of subjects, among them persons whom Donato had trained for his shows.²⁶

The theme was not completely new to Delbœuf, however. His personal interest in animal magnetism went back to his own student years around 1850. In 1869, he had taken part in the (soon to become transnational) controversy on the stigmata of the Belgian mystic Louise Lateau, by stating in a local newspaper that her stigmata were the result of an exceptionally developed imagination, related to her religious education.²⁷ From 1885 onwards, he published extensively on his experiments in French journals such as the *Revue philosophique* and the *Revue de l'hypnotisme*. His critical position vis-à-vis the Salpêtrière School immediately aroused debate with, among others, Alfred Binet.²⁸

In Belgium, he reported extensively on his visits to the Salpêtrière in a liberal periodical, aiming at familiarizing a broad, educated readership with hypnotism and its scientific interest, even though he was explicit in his critical interpretation of Charcot's experiments as 'merely' forms of mutual autosuggestion.²⁹

It was, however, a different publication which stirred the attention and concern of the Belgian medical world. In the summer of 1887, at the Royal Academy of Sciences, Literature and Arts, Delbœuf presented a report on a series of experiments which hinted at the curative effects of hypnotism in the healing process of, for instance, burns. In his paper, he proved to be conscious of the need both to claim authority and not to exceed his competence. He stressed that he did not have the 'honour' to be a medical doctor, carefully entitled his article 'a study in experimental psychology' and qualified his interest as a purely scientific one in the mechanics and origins of the working of hypnotism, rather than in the therapeutic aspect per se. He systematically named the different academic colleagues – doctors and natural scientists – who had assisted at each of the experiments. To exclude possible suspicions of subjectivity, he inserted several pages of observations that his Liège colleague in surgery, Alexander von Winiwarter, had made of an experiment they had designed together, but which had been executed in the absence of Delbœuf himself. The seriousness of his endeavour was further stressed by extensively referring to the academic acknowledgement which hypnotism had gained in France. Delbœuf's personal immersion in this scientific network was displayed by referring to his extensive correspondence with the psychologist Henri Beaunis of the Nancy School, whom he had consulted in connection with one of his experiments and who in turn had consulted his medically trained colleagues Hippolyte Bernheim and Ambroise-Auguste Liébeault in order to explain (and hence support) Delbœuf's new scientific results.³⁰

Nevertheless, Delbœuf's paper clearly contained possibly offensive elements which touched upon larger issues of late nineteenth-century political culture in Belgium. In the first place, the historical introduction of the text consisted of a provocative defence of all those who, like James Braid and Liébeault, had developed the new science of hypnotism in spite of the medical establishment's scepticism, and a tribute to 'those who professionally vulgarize hypnotism', stage magnetizers such as Donato, Hansen and Léon. Delbœuf stated that in his home town, Liège, he had repeatedly witnessed that no danger was involved in their performances. One might just as well prohibit pilgrimages, balls, funfairs and even a number of medicines in the name of public health. He declared that the new trend to persecute stage magnetizers in the name of public health and morality was closely intertwined with the desire of doctors to claim the benefits of these magnetizers' discoveries.³¹ While Delbœuf's criticism of the medical establishment was mostly 'hidden' in the footnotes of his article, an extensive and laudatory press review of his research by the famous French science popularizer and sympathizer with scientific spiritism Camille Flammarion in *La Meuse*, a liberal journal for the region around Liège, was much more explicit. Whoever read Flammarion's text must have concluded that studying hypnotism implied a sharp anti-academic stance.³²

A response from within the medical field was bound to come. Shortly after Flammarion's publication (which had appeared two months after Delbœuf's paper and other press reviews), one of the national professional medical journals devoted its leading article to Delbœuf's research in the Academy. It was probably authored by Jean Thiry, the editor in chief of the journal and a member of the Academy of Medicine. His text consisted of a detailed

criticism of each of Delbœuf's experiments and a call to replicate them; the general tenor of the argument was clear: obviously these experiments had *not* been made by a medical doctor. Charcot's famous claim that medicine had rightly taken possession of hypnotism and should never again leave it in the hands of laymen was explicitly embraced.³³ When the Brussels professor of surgery and liberal representative Jules-Adrien Thiriart put the question of hypnotism on the parliamentary agenda in January 1888, he quoted the same statement by Charcot in extenso.³⁴ In the Academy debate that followed, Thiry himself would plead in favour of a strict regulation of the practice of hypnotism. It was a discourse which fitted neatly with a more general concern of professional medical societies in Belgium, who regularly complained that the illegal exercise of medicine was hardly prosecuted, and that their profession was not sufficiently protected by the government. Unsurprisingly, the parliamentary debate on hypnotism was also, from the start, a debate on the prerogatives of the medical profession, even though doctors were not particularly well represented in Parliament, certainly not in comparison with France, or compared to the high proportion of lawyers.³⁵

Delbœuf's academy text (and Flammarion's rendering of it) was a potential political provocation in yet another way, as he presented the results of his experiments as a confirmation of his opinion of 1869 concerning the stigmata of Louise Lateau. The Lateau question had preoccupied the Belgian Academy of Medicine for more than a year in 1874–75, opposing Catholic and liberal doctors, and had been abandoned because of lack of consensus.³⁶ In Belgian society in 1887, the ideological divide between Catholics and liberals – of whom some were radical freethinkers while others were merely anticlerical – had only deepened, in particular since a public 'school war' on the position of religion in primary education had implicated many of the country's intellectuals.³⁷ A fierce anticlerical, Delbœuf could clearly not resist the temptation to present the reality of hypnotism as a proof of the untenability of Catholic miracles and the incompatibility between science and religion. In doing so, he clearly damaged his own career prospects. In the aftermath of the school war, Catholics had obtained an absolute majority in Parliament and would retain this position until the First World War. This constellation had a direct impact on the nomination policies at state institutions such as the University of Liège, where in 1888 Delbœuf's nomination to become rector was impeded by the Government. Even though the upcoming debate on hypnotism did not develop along the lines of this ideological divide, Delbœuf's own position – between scholarly research of hypnotism and a polemic denial of the existence of miracles – contributed to a politicization of the debate.

Apart from the person of Delbœuf and the ideological issues that his work brought to the fore, the parliamentary debate on hypnotism should be contextualized within the political culture of late nineteenth-century Belgium in yet another way. When Thiriart called for a regulation of the practice of hypnotism in parliament, he simultaneously proposed another reform, supported by psychiatrists and criminal anthropologists: the foundation of special 'prison-asylums' for dangerous or convicted lunatics. Such institutions were expected to provide more surveillance than the regular asylums where mentally ill criminals usually ended up. The parliamentary debate on hypnotism that followed cut across yet another discussion, on a bill which aimed at limiting children's participation in circus spectacles.

Both proposals testified to a new strand of theorizing society, in which the protection of society and its 'weakest members' (women and children, and sometimes workers) against all kinds of dangers and threats gained in prominence. In an age of incipient social legislation, a

discourse on the need to protect citizens from possible dangers easily gained ground. This new, holistic understanding of society (as opposed to an older 'atomistic' understanding) cut across the traditional divide between Catholics and liberals, and was shared by progressive liberals, some socialists and some Christian democrats. Alongside its medicalized discourse, one of the main characteristics of this line of reasoning was a morally informed approach to politics.³⁸ It was paralleled by a new interpretation of criminal justice, the so-called 'social defence' theory, according to which society – and each individual's freedom – had to be protected against potentially dangerous individuals.³⁹ The Catholic Minister of Justice, Jules Lejeune, who soon after Thiriart's call turned out to be an engaged defender of a strict legal regulation of hypnosis, embodied precisely this 'social defence' approach to criminal justice, an approach which (for that matter) allowed him to pacify existing political tensions.⁴⁰

Thus, when Thiriart called in January 1888 for a legal regulation of hypnotism, he did so in a national context in which doctors continued to defend the prerogatives of their profession. It was a context in which the ideological divide was permeating society in a very profound way, but in which, in particular on social and legal issues, this divide could be overcome by a new, holistic understanding of society. Minister Lejeune immediately referred Thiriart's question to the Academy of Medicine for advice. In less than a month, a special commission within the Academy had developed a report with specific recommendations, which were discussed in its plenary sessions in the subsequent months. The Academy's final recommendation and the minister's bill were repeatedly discussed and modified in a special parliamentary commission and in both parliamentary chambers, resulting four years later in a law.⁴¹ In each of these stages, transnational references and contacts played a prominent role.

A TRANSNATIONAL WAVE OF MORAL PANIC

The first issue which was invoked in both Parliament and the Academy of Medicine was the need to forbid public performances of hypnotism. The main arguments that were used in favour of a ban on shows referred to the moral dangers involved. Hypnotism was said to destroy the free will of its subjects, and hence their moral capacities. Women, adolescents and other 'impressionable' or 'nervous' people would constitute the first victims of its debasing effects on human dignity. In an era in which strength of character constituted an important element of the bourgeois male self, the 'loss' of character, the reduction of healthy persons to unresisting automata, was indeed seen as a danger. It was an argument which could be merged into the new sociopolitical discourse on the need to protect weak members of society, a discourse which sounded all the more convincing as the dangers of hypnotism were represented in terms of disease, and its success as a new form of epidemic.

Arguments of a more explicitly political nature were equally used. Hypnosis, so it was argued, killed the free will, the foundation of modern citizenship. In the initial report of the Academy, its author, the Catholic doctor Ernest Masoin, made a comparison with the importance of the liberty of the nation, a cherished romantic topos in the relatively young and liberal state of Belgium. He also associated the effects of hypnotism with those of ancient slavery.⁴² In Parliament, representatives referred to Liégeois's comparison of individual criminal suggestibility with the suggestibility of the masses in the political demonstrations of French Boulangism, a popular nationalist and anti-parliamentary

movement.⁴³ In a context of recent large-scale and violent workers' protest and of an upcoming Socialist Party which strived for universal suffrage, Belgian members of Parliament associated the dangers of hypnotism with their political concern for the crowd, and for mass insurrection. In doing so, they echoed a broader, transnational wave of cultural criticism, which would soon be articulated by popular writers such as Gustave Le Bon.⁴⁴

Calls in favour of a ban on public spectacles were specified and legitimized by referring to measures which were taken in Austria, Prussia, Italy and Denmark, suggesting that Belgium was lagging behind other countries.⁴⁵ International references were omnipresent in other ways as well. In the Academy of Medicine, participants in the debate were eager to demonstrate their in-depth knowledge of the French scholarly discussion on hypnotism. Personal correspondence with a foreign hypnosis scholar was strategically quoted. On top of this, several members of the Academy – Jean Crocq, François Semal and Jean-Pierre Nuel – referred to their own experience with hypnotism and to the shows they had attended.⁴⁶ Even in Parliament, politicians proudly referred to their visits to the Salpêtrière Hospital or to the clinic of the Nancy School.⁴⁷ Clearly, bookish knowledge was considered insufficient when trying to claim authority in the field of hypnotism. Nuel, a professor in ophthalmology at the University of Liège who had assisted in Delbœuf's experiments, even asked his fellow Academy members who had no personal experience with hypnotism to abstain from voting.⁴⁸ At the same time, however, scholarly knowledge proved necessary to distinguish oneself from lay practitioners.

Within the Academy, strategies of distinction and exclusion were most clearly directed towards Delbœuf. His characterization of public performances as both instructive and innocent constituted for many Academy members a starting point to discredit his authority as a hypnosis scholar altogether. His scepticism concerning the question of criminal suggestion probably added to this. He had strong doubts about most examples of alleged hypnotic crime, and was critical of Liégeois's experiments proving the willingness of hypnotized subjects to commit violent crimes. According to him, Liégeois and others overlooked the important amount of unconscious role-playing which was at stake in these experiments. Participants in such experiments either knew that there was no real danger or refused to perform a real crime when they did believe that they were asked to do so, he observed.⁴⁹ In Belgium, Delbœuf fuelled the animosity of the Academy with a vehement response to Thiriar's proposal in Parliament and the first Academy report, a publication which he circulated widely.⁵⁰

As a result, the Belgian debate was closely followed in France, among both hypnosis scholars and lay magnetizers.⁵¹ The Catholic doctor from Lille, François Guérmonprez, used his prerogatives as a corresponding member of the Academy to come to Brussels to support the opponents of public performances with an intervention.⁵² And at the first international conference on hypnotism in 1889, Ladame called Delbœuf 'our principal adversary' in his report on the first question which was scheduled by the conference, on whether stage performances should be forbidden.⁵³ Minister Lejeune would in turn skilfully refer to the conference's negative answer to substantiate his bill.⁵⁴

But Delbœuf could equally count on some defenders abroad. When in 1889 Liégeois reiterated his alarming analysis of criminal suggestion in a monograph, he added as an appendix to the work an elaborate response to the first report of the Belgian Academy of Medicine. In it, he criticized Masoin's plea to prohibit public performances. It was not because the dangers of hypnotism were real that they were related to public performances,

Liégeois argued. These shows were in general harmless, and even quite boring after a while. Rather than attacking them, some tribute should be paid to magnetizers such as Donato, as they had participated in the dissemination of hypnotism.⁵⁵ Support for Delbœuf also came from the Italian academic psychiatrist Enrico Morselli, whose interest in the topic of animal magnetism and hypnotism had been stirred by Donato's performances in Turin in 1886. The public debate which followed in Italy had opposed Morselli and Lombroso, who insisted that magnetizers like Donato could produce hypnotic epidemics and endanger public health. The ensuing campaign of Lombroso and other psychiatrists had soon resulted in an Italian ban on public shows, a decision which was deplored by Morselli.⁵⁶

Morselli's and Liégeois's pleas against the prohibition of public performances were in vain. Even though most members of the Belgian Academy and several members of Parliament paid tribute to the seriousness of the work of the School of Nancy, there was little resistance against the powerful transnational discourse associated with the authority of Charcot and Lombroso on the dangers of public performances. The two Academy members who did oppose this stance – Nuel and the liberal politician and hygienist from Liège Hyacinthe Kuborn – pointed to the fact that its defenders were unable to name problems which had resulted from performances in Belgium. Kuborn suggested that they were merely reiterating what was being said elsewhere. Even the trustworthiness of these statements was not always clear. Kuborn added that Lombroso's famous claims, on which so many relied, had with good reason been contested, referring also to Morselli's letter in support of Delbœuf.⁵⁷ Why prohibit something which had not caused problems in Belgium yet? Maybe Belgians were simply not as impressionable as people from the Mediterranean, Kuborn suggested. If, as he had observed, public spectacles had not constituted a danger in Liège, why would that be different in Brussels or other Belgian provinces? Kuborn not only pointed to the impact of the transnational character of the moral concern on hypnotism, he also testified indirectly to another mechanism at work: the role of personal and regionally based networks. The two sole defenders of public performances within the Academy happened to be from the city of Liège; Nuel had even collaborated with Delbœuf in experiments at the university. The weight of similar regional and personal networks would be even more prominent in the discussion in Parliament, where the question on the right to practise hypnotism led to a heated debate.

REGIONAL NETWORKS AGAINST A MEDICAL MONOPOLY

While the threats and moral dangers of public performances were questioned more explicitly in the Academy of Medicine than in Parliament, the opposite occurred when it came to hypnotism's medical dangers, and the associated idea that its practice should be reserved to doctors. Charcot's belief that hypnosis was essentially a pathological condition, rather than a state akin to sleep, nurtured ideas on the possibly harmful effect of the frequent or unskilled administration of hypnotism, in particular on subjects who were considered to be mentally 'delicate'. The Academy report had been very clear in its advice to prohibit public representations, but its formal advice to the legislator concerning the right to perform hypnotism was no more than a call 'to prevent and sentence the abuses which can result from the practice of hypnotism'.⁵⁸ Some members, including Semal, had explicitly called for a monopoly for doctors, while others, such as Nuel, had argued

against it. Minister Lejeune, who consistently characterized himself as ‘incompetent’ in matters of hypnotism and as merely ‘obeying the opinions of the Academy’, chose to interpret the Academy’s opinion as a call to restrict the right to perform hypnosis on mentally ill persons and youngsters under 18 to medical doctors. The parliamentary committee which was assigned to study the question in detail and which counted Dr Thiriart among its members, supported Lejeune’s bill and even advised raising the minimum age to 21, the official age of adulthood.⁵⁹

The parliamentary commission published its report in April 1891. Delbœuf, of course, was furious, and desperate. ‘Belgium is getting prepared to provide itself with an absurd law according to which I would never have been able to perform the experiments which have given me fame’, he wrote to William James in June.⁶⁰ At the end of December, he reported to the Swiss doctor and hypnosis scholar August Forel: ‘I am drowning in the hypnosis question, and I am fighting like a devil.’⁶¹ His fight had not been completely in vain.⁶² When in early December the Chamber of Deputies held a plenary discussion on the bill, opinions appeared much more diverse than the committee’s report had suggested. In the course of the same month, a second report was delivered by a committee within the Senate and an amendment to the bill was proposed during the Senate’s plenary meeting. The final version of the law, which was discussed and approved in both chambers in the spring of 1892, was indeed less strict than Lejeune’s initial bill: it provided the possibility of filing an individual request with the Government to receive a temporary authorization to practise hypnosis on all types of persons without a medical degree.⁶³

In the parliamentary discussion in December 1891, Delbœuf’s international renown as a hypnosis scholar and the explicit support that he enjoyed in his fight against a medical monopoly from foreign scholars such as Bernheim was immediately brought up. It was agreed that a scholar of his renown should be able to continue his research. Delbœuf was, however, not the only person who lobbied both in Parliament and in the press to reconsider the question. In the course of 1891, several publications and an official petition were sent to the Senate with proposals to amend Lejeune’s bill so as to allow experienced magnetizers to be authorized to continue their work.⁶⁴ The requests all came from a group of magnetizers in Verviers, where a progressive liberal society for the education of workers functioned as a meeting place and informal laboratory for their explorations of magnetism and hypnotism.⁶⁵ Even though their interpretations of magnetism and/or hypnotism differed, all three authors paid tribute to both Delbœuf and popular magnetizers such as Donato. They presented the therapeutic practice of hypnotism as a much needed complement to classical medical therapies. Hypnotists, they argued, had specific personal skills which not all doctors were able to acquire. Moreover, a therapy based on magnetism or suggestion was a very time-consuming activity. Owing to their busy work schedules, many doctors simply could not afford this kind of philanthropic devotion, and many of them were happy to entrust some of their difficult patients to magnetizers whom they knew.

Léon Lobet, the most active member of the ‘School of Verviers’ (as the group was called in the discussions in Parliament, in parallel to those of Nancy and Paris), used the same strategies that had been used in the Academy and in Parliament. He inserted in his pamphlet his correspondence with the ‘father’ of the Nancy School, Liébeault, ‘an authority well worthy of the Academy’. Even though he was a doctor, Liébeault had practised for several decades as a magnetic healer without much institutional recognition.

He now supported Lobet's stance against the Belgian bill (as he had earlier supported Delbœuf), and proposed instead a democratized approach to hypnotism as 'the therapy that is in everybody's reach'.⁶⁶ Liébeault's letter was published separately in *La Meuse*, which also offered ample space to Delbœuf to publish on the issue.⁶⁷

The actions of both Delbœuf and the Verviers group received a considerable amount of sympathy from the national press as well. As a result, Dr Kuborn, who had been a dissident voice in the Academy, felt obliged to counter in the presence of his fellow members the insinuations in the press that the Academy had made a negative judgement on the phenomenon of hypnotism or had pronounced itself in favour of a monopoly of doctors.⁶⁸ Even a professional medical association from the Liège region qualified its overall positive appreciation of the bill (which was said to provide a welcome protection of the interests of the medical corps) by adding that the few acknowledged magnetizers to whom doctors now and then had to resort should not be prosecuted.⁶⁹ In January 1892, the Brussels-based Catholic doctor and hypnotist Prosper Van Velsen joined in the criticism and, together with a Brussels lawyer, published a sharp analysis of the bill in a widely read legal journal. Their main argument against the bill was that it would turn out to be inapplicable, as it was impossible to define sharply and scientifically what hypnotism exactly was, and defendants would always be able to argue that they had only simulated hypnosis.⁷⁰ Lobet eagerly integrated their statement, which was also a harsh criticism of the incompetence of both the Academy and Parliament in matters of hypnosis, into his lobbying campaign towards Parliament.⁷¹

The Verviers group did not limit its actions to publications; its network reached directly into Parliament as well. One of the regular participants in the informal reunions of the group, the lawyer and practising magnetizer Léopold Mallar, was a liberal member of the Chamber of Representatives. While he was not able to be present at the plenary debates, he asked a fellow representative from Verviers, Pierre Grosfils, to speak in his name.⁷² Early in December 1890, Grosfils indeed proposed an amendment to the bill according to which magnetizers who were accompanied by a doctor would be authorized to perform. While this proposal was not accepted, it nevertheless launched the debate on how to moderate Lejeune's bill. Later in December, the idea of individual authorizations took shape in the Senate – an idea which had been proposed by Lobet and by Astère Denis, his fellow magnetizer from Verviers.⁷³ While the role of both representatives from Verviers was quite outspoken, it was maybe even more striking that in the subsequent debate almost all advocates of a more liberal interpretation of the law were liberals from the region of Liège. Just as within the Academy, the regional network around Delbœuf and the University of Liège seemed to join in action against the ideas of the Brussels Catholic Lejeune.⁷⁴

In this process, new arguments which relativized both the medical dangers and the unique expertise of doctors entered the parliamentary debate. Several politicians acknowledged that having a medical degree was no guarantee of being a good hypnotist, as hypnosis was not even part of the medical curriculum. Medical doctors might, moreover, be inclined to search for a monopoly, and therefore their advice should perhaps not be trusted. While at first it was suggested that authorizations should be decided by the provincial medical committees, this idea was rejected, in order to guarantee both a nationally uniform and an objective judgement. The liberal nobleman and renowned naturalist Edmond de Sélys Longchamps tried in vain to ward off the clause, which limited authorizations to one year. To him, it was an insult to scholars to force them to request permission yearly in order to be able to do their work as scientists.⁷⁵ When a fellow member of the Senate expressed the hope that the government would be lenient in according authorizations,

Minister Lejeune closed the debate by stating quite firmly: ‘On the contrary! ... The authorization will only be accorded to those who both scientifically and morally present the fullest guarantees.’⁷⁶ Lejeune’s firm conviction that society had to be protected against hypnotizers, who, in his view, constituted a truly exceptional threat, had remained intact.

CONCLUSION

The European debate on the regulation of the practice of hypnotism took place in a period during which doctors were looking for ways to strengthen their (still very much contested) authority through legal claims towards a monopoly. In the case of hypnotism, doctors in Belgium succeeded in a very efficient way in having the state defend their interests: five years before the law was voted on, hypnotism had barely been on the medical or public agenda. For the medical community, the debate functioned as a catalyst to start defining the nature and medical uses of hypnotism, and to separate it from the lay context in which it was embedded. As Delbœuf’s collective scientific practices and the debate in Parliament showed, the boundaries between lay, scientific and medical approaches of hypnotism were difficult to define, and certainly not impermeable.

Warnings against the immoral or otherwise dangerous aspects of magnetism had been pronounced earlier as well, by religious authors, among others. In a different manner from before, however, these dangers were now presented as a collective social problem, a responsibility of the state. Hypnotism became part of a national political framework. In an age of incipient social legislation and organicist social theories, a discourse on the need to protect citizens from possible dangers gained ground. The crusade of Delbœuf was indeed also a political fight. As an old-style anticlerical and liberal, he was a fierce defender of the principle of freedom of treatment without regulation by the state. As a philosopher, he had invested a great deal of his intellectual energy earlier in his career in reconciling scientific determinism with his belief in free will. His interpretation of hypnotism left this belief intact: he saw the patient and the willpower to which the therapist appealed as the active party in hypnosis.⁷⁷ While Delbœuf’s world view was one of liberation of individuals from the chains of religion, he had little affinity with new social discourses on regulation and protection as a means to guarantee individuals’ freedom.

The relative ease with which the law came into being can certainly also be ascribed to the transnational character of the discourse of danger involved. References to foreign – in particular French and Italian – authors not only functioned as a way to enhance one’s authority but also as a strategy to underline the urgent character of the question, as did references to legal measures that were taken elsewhere. Even though proponents of the law suggested that Belgium was lagging behind other countries, the law was probably exceptional in its dual character, regulating public performances and medical practice. In the parliamentary debates leading to the French law of 1892 on the practice of medicine, for instance, the explicit suggestion had been made to ban magnetizers, but was discarded in the course of the debate.⁷⁸ Similarly, two decades later, a law to establish a medical monopoly on the exercise of hypnotism was called for in Germany, but it was never enacted.⁷⁹ While the transnational atmosphere of moral panic had created a seedbed for the Belgian law, its eventual outlook owed much to the powerful lobbying work of an essentially local network of lay magnetizers and to Delbœuf’s renown, which stimulated several liberal doctors and members of parliament from the Liège region to defend a more lenient law.

The importance or the impact of the Belgian law should not, however, be overestimated. It was in the first place a symbolic victory for the medical establishment: a political measure which did not cost the government anything – contrary to the prison-asylums which had been requested by Thiriart. The latter cost a great deal and would only be realized decades later. As had been predicted by its critics, it was very difficult to apply the law: how could one prove that somebody had had recourse to hypnosis? Magnetizers resented the law and tried to be more careful than before but, fundamentally, not much changed, as some of their healing practices had been just as punishable before 1892 on the basis of existing medical legislation. The Verviers hypnotist Astère Denis was the only magnetizer who requested and received an individual authorization from the government.⁸⁰

The law certainly did not mean the end of hypnotic shows either. Donato continued to give performances in several Belgian towns. He avoided the word ‘hypnosis’, re-baptizing his shows as ‘evenings of illusions’ (*soirées d’illusions*). In 1895, he was nevertheless taken to court several times. He was acquitted in all cases. His main argument was that there was no hypnosis at stake in these shows, that he had only simulated it. The experts concluded that it was possible that Donato had used hypnotism during his shows, but that this could not be proved.⁸¹ The cases inspired the Academy member and hypnosis scholar Crocq to call for another law which would also prohibit shows of simulated hypnotism.⁸² Crocq’s call was in vain, however. Magnetism’s high fevers seemed to be over by 1896.

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NOTES

- 1 ‘Loi sur l’hypnotisme’, *Le Moniteur belge*, 4 June 1892, p. 1634.
- 2 I borrow the concept of ‘hypnomania’ from E. Lafferton, ‘Death by hypnosis: an 1894 Hungarian case and its European reverberations’, *Endeavour* **30**(2), 65–70 (2006). On the public visibility of hypnosis in the period 1880–1900, see e.g. Ruth Harris, *Murders and madness: medicine, law and society in the fin de siècle* (Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 155–207; Jacqueline Carroy, *Hypnose, suggestion et psychologie. L’invention de sujets* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1991), pp. 48–64, 89–96; A. Gauld, *A history of hypnotism* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 297–362; S. Andriopoulos, *Possessed: hypnotic crimes, corporate fiction, and the invention of cinema* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 19–41; H. Wolfram, *The stepchildren of science: psychical research and parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870–1939* (Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2009), pp. 83–130; A. Mayer, *Sites of the unconscious: hypnosis and the emergence of the psychoanalytic setting* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 93–107.
- 3 G. Gilles de la Tourette, *L’Hypnotisme et les états analogues au point de vue médico-légal* (Plon, Nourrit et Cie, Paris, 1887), pp. 451–487.
- 4 A. Graus, ‘Hypnosis in Spain (1888–1905): from spectacle to medical treatment of mediumship’, *Stu. Hist. Phil. Biol. Biomed. Sci.* **30**, 1–9 (2014).

- 5 The history of magnetism and hypnotism in Belgium constitutes almost unexplored terrain, except for G. Zorab, 'Belgium', in *Abnormal hypnotic phenomena: a survey of nineteenth-century cases* (ed. Eric J. Dingwall), vol. 2, pp. 3–50 (J. London & A. Churchill, London, 1967); K. Velle, 'Geneesheren in de ban van hypnose (1880–1900)', *Oostvlaamse Zanten* **65**, 1, 51–64 (1990); M. De Sadeleer, "'Druk uw handen op mijn zieke ledematen": een lichamelijke benadering van het magnetisme in het negentiende-eeuwse België', *Tijd-Schrift. Heemkunde en Lokaal-erfgoed Praktijk in Vlaanderen* **5**(3), 35–47 (2015). Femke Paulussen, 'Hypnose: kwakzalverij of geneeskunde? De maatschappelijke toelaatbaarheid van hypnose in België (1880–1914)', MA dissertation, University of Leuven (2001), on the regulation of hypnotism in Belgium, has been very helpful.
- 6 R. Porter, *The greatest benefit to mankind: a medical history of humanity from antiquity to the present* (Fontana Press, London, 1997), pp. 352–356.
- 7 R. Schepers, *De opkomst van het medisch beroep in België. De evolutie van de wetgeving en de beroepsorganisaties in de 19de eeuw* (Amsterdam University Press, 1989), pp. 127–129.
- 8 'Hypnotisme', in *Pandectes belges. Encyclopédie de législation, de doctrine et de jurisprudence belges* (Edmond Picard, Napoléon d'Hoffschmidt and Jules de le Court), vol. 50, col. 674–697 (F. Larcier, Brussels, 1895); M. De Sadeleer, 'De kracht van genezing: de keuze voor een magnetische behandeling in België (1860–1910)', MA thesis, University of Leuven (2013), pp. 18–26.
- 9 On doctors experimenting with therapeutic magnetism, see e.g. A. Gonzalez de Pablo, 'Animal magnetism in Spanish medicine (1786–1860)', *Hist. Psychiatry* **17**, 279–298 (2006); J. Carroy, 'L'école hypnologique de Nancy', *Le Pays Lorrain* **85**, 108–116 (1988), at p. 111; and Andrea Graus's contribution to this special issue.
- 10 A. Burggraeve, 'Du magnétisme animal et de ses applications à l'art de guérir', *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique* 2nd ser. **2**, 147–165 (1858–59). See also, for instance, *Bull. de la Société de Médecine de Gand* **3**, 63–67, 83–90, 132–136 (1837).
- 11 'Observation d'un cas d'hystérie, caractérisé par des symptômes extraordinaires, par M. Le docteur A. Sotteau', *Annales de la Société de Médecine de Gand* **14**, 177–228 (1850).
- 12 See e.g. 'Proposition de M. Montius relative au magnétisme animal', *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique* **2**, 385 (1842–43). On the French debate leading to the disapproval in 1837, see B. Méheust, *Somnambulisme et médiumité*, vol. 1, *Le Défi du magnétisme* (Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond, Le Plessis-Robinson, 1999), pp. 384–412.
- 13 H. Van Holsbeek, *Lettres sur le magnétisme animal* (De Tircher et Monceaux, Brussels, 1863), p. 26.
- 14 See e.g. Gauld, *op.cit.* (note 2), p. 188.
- 15 See e.g. Donato, 'L'Illustration et M. Charcot', *Revue magnétique* **2**, 3–9 (1879); idem, 'Correspondance', *Revue magnétique* **2**, 14–15 (1879); 'De droite et de gauche', *Journal du magnétisme*, 196 (1882); E. Cavailhon, *Le Fascinateur magnétique*, with a preface by Donato (E. Dentu, Paris, 1882); 'Les fascinés peints par eux-mêmes', *Le Magnétisme*, 265–271 (1886).
- 16 H. Wolffram 'An object of vulgar curiosity: legitimizing medical hypnosis in imperial Germany', *J. Hist. Med. Allied Sci.* **67**(1), 156–158 (2012).
- 17 Donato, 'Lectures et controverses. Réponse à Gallus, feuilletoniste du *Mouvement Médical*', *Revue Magnétique* **1**, 221–223 (1878). In this article, Donato predicted that, in the near future, doctors such as Charcot would claim the discovery of magnetism, after having been introduced to magnetism by lay magnetizers.
- 18 For the legal press, see e.g. 'L'hypnotisme et la suggestion dans leurs rapports avec le droit et la justice. Communication de M. Liégeois au congrès de Nancy', *Journal des Tribunaux* **5**, 1137–1143 (1886). For a brief reference to the dangers of public spectacles in the medical press, see e.g. *Bull. de la Société Royale de Médecine Publique* **4**, 51 (1884–86).
- 19 P.-L. Ladame, 'La névrose hypnotique devant la médecine légale. Du viol pendant le sommeil hypnotique', *Annales d'hygiène publique et de médecine légale*, 3rd ser. **8**, 518–534 (1882).

- 20 See e.g. P. Guarnieri, 'Theatre and laboratory: medical attitudes to animal magnetism in late-nineteenth-century Italy', in *Studies in Alternative Medicine* (ed. Roger Cooter), pp. 118–139 (Macmillan, London, 1988).
- 21 See e.g. Gilles de la Tourette, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp. 445–447.
- 22 J. Liégeois, *De la suggestion hypnotique dans ses rapports avec le droit civil et le droit criminel. Mémoire lu à l'Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques (séances des 5, 19, 26 avril, 3 et 10 mai 1884)* (De Berger-Levrault, Nancy, 1885).
- 23 On Milo De Meyer's private session for doctors, see 'Une séance d'hypnotisme', *Journal de Bruxelles*, 21 December 1887. On Léon's private session for doctors, professors, lawyers and journalists in 1887, see J. Delbœuf, 'Comme quoi il n'y a pas d'hypnotisme', *La Meuse*, 28 November 1891.
- 24 For a very sharp judgment on De Torcy's shows and public spectacles in general, see e.g. 'La ville. Chronique', *L'Indépendance Belge*, 20 December 1887.
- 25 On Delbœuf, see F. Duyckaerts, *Joseph Delbœuf, philosophe et hypnotiseur* (Laboratoires Delagrangé-Synthélabo, Le Plessis-Robinson, 1992); J. Carroy and P.-H. Castel (eds), *Delbœuf et Bernheim entre hypnose et suggestion, Corpus. Revue de philosophie*, special issue **32** (1997); A. Gauld, 'Joseph Delbœuf (1831–1896): a forerunner of modern ideas on hypnosis', *Contemporary Hypnosis* **14**, 216–225 (1997); A. Leblanc, 'Thirteen days: Joseph Delbœuf versus Pierre Janet on the nature of hypnotic suggestions', *J. Hist. Behav. Sci.* **40**, 123–147 (2004); J. Carroy, *Nuits savants. Une histoire des rêves (1800–1945)* (Éditions de l'EHESS, Paris, 2012), pp. 183–202; T. Trochu, 'Comment un savant devient "guérisseur". D'après une lettre inédite de Joseph Delbœuf à William James', *Rev. Hist. Sci. Humaines* **28**, 165–187 (2016).
- 26 See e.g. J. Delbœuf, 'De l'influence de l'éducation et de l'imitation dans le somnambulisme provoqué', *Rev. Philos.* **22**, 146–171 (1886).
- 27 Delbœuf reissued his article on Lateau from 1869 in his *Le Magnétisme animal. A propos d'une visite à l'École de Nancy* (Félix Alcan, Paris, 1890), which in its turn was reissued as J. Delbœuf, *Le Sommeil et les rêves et autres textes* (ed. Jacqueline Carroy and François Duyckaerts), pp. 387–401 (Fayard, Paris, 1993).
- 28 E.g. A. Binet and J. Delbœuf, 'Les diverses écoles hypnotiques', *Rev. Philos.* **22**, 532–538 (1886).
- 29 J. Delbœuf, 'Une visite à la Salpêtrière', *Revue de Belgique* **18**, 121–147, 258–275 (1886).
- 30 J. Delbœuf, 'De l'origine des effets curatifs de l'hypnotisme. Etude de psychologie expérimentale', *Bull. de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Belgique*, 3rd ser. **13**, 773–812 (1887).
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 775.
- 32 Camille Flammarion, 'Magnétisme et médecine', *La Meuse*, 27 August 1887. Delbœuf's article was positively reviewed in several Brussels newspapers, both liberal and Catholic. On Flammarion, see e.g. S. Lachapelle, *Investigating the supernatural: from spiritism and occultism to psychical research and metapsychics in France, 1853–1931* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2011), pp. 25–27, 94–108.
- 33 'De l'hypnotisme', *Presse médicale belge* **39**, 297–300 (1887).
- 34 *Annales parlementaires. Chambre des Représentants* (Chambre des Représentants, Brussels, 1888), session of 24 January 1888, p. 430.
- 35 K. Velle, *De nieuwe biechtvaders. De sociale geschiedenis van de arts in België* (Kritak, Louvain, 1991), pp. 169–185.
- 36 S. Lachapelle, 'Between miracle and sickness: Louise Lateau and the experience of stigmata and ecstasy', *Configurations* **12**, 77–105 (2004).
- 37 On the school war (1878–84) and the societal impact of this ideological divide in Belgium, see E. Witte, 'The battle for monasteries, cemeteries and schools: Belgium', in *Culture wars: secular–Catholic conflict in nineteenth-century Europe* (ed. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser), pp. 102–128 (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

- 38 On the holistic paradigm in Belgian parliament, see e.g. H. De Smaele, 'Het Belgische politieke discours en de 'eigenheid' van de vrouw aan het einde van de negentiende eeuw', *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 1(4), 27–38 (1998).
- 39 On the social defence theory in Belgium, see F. Tulkens (ed.), *Généalogie de la défense sociale en Belgique (1880–1914)* (E. Story-Scientia, Brussels, 1988). On its impact in France, see e.g. Harris, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 105–124.
- 40 On Lejeune and the social defence theory, see S. Christiaensen, *Tussen klassieke en moderne criminele politiek. Leven en beleid van Jules Lejeune* (Leuven University Press, Louvain, 2004), pp. 223–228.
- 41 For the debate in the Academy, see *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique*, 4th ser. 2, 19, 95–140, 225–250, 312–377, 405–438, 503–557, 582–607, 633–644, 664–678, 838–897 (1888); 4th ser. 5, 774–777 (1891). For the parliamentary debate, see *Annales parlementaires. Chambre des Représentants*, sessions of 24 and 25 January 1888, 27 April 1888, 3 and 4 December 1891 and 11 and 12 May 1892; *Annales parlementaires. Sénat*, sessions of 17 and 18 December 1891 and 19 May 1892; *Documents parlementaires. Chambre des Représentants*, 15 April 1890, 24 April 1891 and 10 March 1892; *Documents parlementaires. Sénat*, 15 December 1891.
- 42 *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique* (note 41), p. 113.
- 43 *Annales parlementaires. Chambre des Représentants* (note 41), session of 3 December 1891.
- 44 See e.g. S. Barrows, *Distorting mirrors: visions of the crowd in late nineteenth-century France* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981); R. Harris, 'Murder under hypnosis in the case of Gabrielle Bompard: psychiatry in the court-room in Belle Epoque Paris', *Psychol. Med.* 15(3), 477–505 (1985); J. Carroy, 'Le peuple, le magnétisme et l'hypnose: de l'invention du peuple à celle des foules', in *L'invention du peuple* (ed. Rose Goetz and Alain Trognon), pp. 137–148 (Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1993).
- 45 *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique* (note 41), p. 138.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 237 (Crocq), p. 358 (Nuel), p. 505 (Semal).
- 47 See for instance the interventions of Thiriari and of Jules d'Andrimont, who was not a doctor. The role of visits to Paris and Nancy in the introduction of the German medical community to hypnotism has been pointed to by Heather Wolfram, *op. cit.* (note 16), pp. 158–159.
- 48 *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique* (note 41), p. 376.
- 49 Gauld, *op. cit.* (note 25).
- 50 J. Delbœuf, *L'Hypnotisme et la liberté des représentations publiques. Lettres à M. le professeur Thiriari, représentant suivies de l'examen du rapport présenté par M. Masoin à l'Académie de Médecine* (Desoer, Liège, 1888). The text was first published in the newspaper *Journal de Liège*.
- 51 See e.g. *Revue de l'hypnotisme* 2, 309–310, 340–341, 342–344, 368–372 (1887–88); 'Revue des livres', *Journal du Magnétisme*, 250–251 (July 1888).
- 52 Guernonprez's paper was also published as 'De la nécessité d'interdire les séances publiques d'hypnotisme', *Revue de l'hypnotisme* 3, 9–18 (1888–89).
- 53 P.-L. Ladame, 'La nécessité d'interdire les séances publiques d'hypnotisme: intervention des pouvoirs publics dans la réglementation de l'hypnotisme', in *Premier congrès international de l'hypnotisme expérimental et thérapeutique. Comptes rendus* (ed. Edgar Bérillon), pp. 28–38 (Octave Doin, Paris, 1889).
- 54 *Documents parlementaires. Chambre des Représentants* (note 41), 15 April 1890.
- 55 J. Liégeois, *De la suggestion et du somnambulisme dans leurs rapports avec la jurisprudence et la médecine légale* (O. Doin, Paris, 1889), pp. 721–729.
- 56 Delbœuf published Morselli's letter of 14 March 1888 in J. Delbœuf, *L'Hypnotisme devant les chambres législatives belges* (Alcan/Weissenbruch/Desoer, Paris/Brussels/Liège, 1892), pp. 27–29. On Morselli, Donato and the Italian debate, see Guarnieri, *op. cit.* (note 20); M. T. Brancaccio, 'Enrico Morselli's psychology and "spiritism": psychiatry, psychology and psychical research in Italy in the decades around 1900', *Stud. Hist. Philos. Sci. Part C: Stud.*

- Hist. Philos. Biol. Biomed. Sci.* **48**, 75–84 (2014); and Maria Teresa Brancaccio's contribution to the current special issue.
- 57 *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique* (note 41), pp. 405–420.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 895.
- 59 *Documents parlementaires. Chambre des Représentants* (note 41), 15 April 1890 (Lejeune) and 24 April 1891 (Commission).
- 60 'La Belgique se prépare à se doter d'une loi absurde aux termes de lesquelles je n'aurais pu faire aucune des expériences qui m'ont fait un nom.' J. Delbœuf to W. James, 11 June 1891, Harvard University Library, William James Papers, bMS Am 1092, 164.
- 61 'Je suis enfoncé jusqu'au cou dans l'hypnotisme. Je lutte comme un beau diable contre la bêtise humaine qui produit chez nous des fruits énormes.' J. Delbœuf to A. Forel, 29 December 1891, in H. Walser (ed.), *August Forel. Briefe. Correspondance 1864–1927* (Hans Huber, Bonn and Stuttgart, 1968), p. 270.
- 62 See e.g. J. Delbœuf, *Magnétiseurs et médecins* (Alcan, Paris, 1890), and, in response to the parliamentary debate of December 1891, Delbœuf, *op. cit.* (note 56).
- 63 'Loi sur l'hypnotisme', *op. cit.* (note 1).
- 64 A. Bonjean, *L'Hypnotisme, ses rapports avec le droit et la thérapeutique, la suggestion mentale* (Alcan, Paris, 1890); A. Denis, *La Voie naturelle et l'utilité de l'hypnotisme* (Gilon, Paris-Verviers, 1891); L. Lobet, *L'Hypnotisme en Belgique et le projet de loi soumis aux Chambres législatives* (Massin, Verviers, May 1891); L. Lobet, *L'Hypnotisme devant les Chambres belges. Lettre ouverte à Monsieur le Sénateur* (Massin, Verviers, December 1891).
- 65 The society 'Soirées Populaires de Verviers' had been founded in 1866. Around 1890, both the Society and its weekly *Journal des Soirées Populaires de Verviers* (1883–1894) were directed by Léon Lobet.
- 66 'Une autorité qui vaut largement celle de l'Académie' and 'L'hypnotisme c'est la thérapeutique à la portée de tout le monde' (L. Lobet, *op. cit. (Lettre ouverte)* (note 64), pp. 5–6). On Liébeault's support of Delbœuf, see Delbœuf, *L'hypnotisme* (note 57), pp. 25–26.
- 67 'Hypnotisme', *La Meuse*, 10 December 1891.
- 68 Kuborn's response concerning the monopoly question was in its turn contested by, among others, Masoin, who claimed that the Academy was in favour of Lejeune's bill. 'Motion d'ordre', *Bull. de l'Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique*, 4th ser. **5**, 774–777 (1891). The Academy's response was, in its own turn, ridiculed in the press: see e.g. *La Meuse*, 31 December 1891.
- 69 L. Merveille, 'La loi sur l'hypnotisme', *Gazette Médicale de Liège* **4**, 133–135, 17 December 1891.
- 70 V. Denyn and P. Van Velsen, 'Sur l'hypnotisme, à propos du récent projet de loi', *Journal des Tribunaux*, 28 January 1892. Van Velsen's position was also inspired by a recent, much-commented-upon trial against two magnetizers who were covered by a doctor. Masoin had functioned as a medical expert in the trial, while Delbœuf had been consulted by the defendants. The trial resulted in an acquittal on 1 December 1891.
- 71 Noël [=L. Lobet], 'L'Hypnotisme devant les Chambres belges. 3^e lettre', *Soirées Populaires*, 30 April 1892. Lobet used a more extended version of the text of Denyn and Van Velsen which had appeared in the French *Revue de l'hypnotisme* **6**, 278–282 (1891–92).
- 72 On Léopold Mallar's activities as a magnetizer, see Bonjean, *op. cit.* (note 64), pp. I–V, 36, 101–120. Although Mallar participated in the vote in the House of Representatives on 4 December 1890, Grosfils spoke in his name at the session of 11 May 1892.
- 73 See Lobet's and Denis's publications, *op. cit.* (note 64).
- 74 Alongside Grosfils and Wallar from Verviers were Emile Dupont, Alfred Magis, Georges Montefiori Levi, Edmond de Selys-Longchamps and Joseph Warnant, all liberals from Liège. An exception to this alignment was Floribert Soupart, a Catholic doctor from Ghent, who was also in favour of a system of individual authorizations, but who insisted that they should be granted by doctors.

- 75 *Annales parlementaires. Sénat*, session of 17 December 1891, p. 100.
- 76 ‘Mais c’est tout le contraire ! . . . L’autorisation ne sera accordée qu’à ceux dont la science et la moralité offriront, sous ce rapport, les garanties les plus entières.’ *Annales parlementaires. Sénat*, session of 12 May 1892, p. 576.
- 77 See e.g. Delbœuf, *op. cit.* (note 30), p. 805. See also the contribution of Holger Maehle to this special issue, ‘A dangerous method? The German discourse on hypnotic suggestion therapy around 1900’, *Notes Rec.* **71**, 197–211 (2017).
- 78 See P. Brouardel, *L’Exercice de la médecine et le charlatanisme* (Baillièere et fils, Paris, 1899), pp. 529–540; idem, *La Profession médicale au commencement du XXe siècle* (Baillièere et fils, Paris, 1903), pp. 94–98. Earlier legal measures had existed to guarantee a medical monopoly of the therapeutic use of magnetism in Prussia (1817) and Austria (1845), according to Gilles de la Tourette, *op. cit.* (note 3), p. 461.
- 79 See Holger Maehle’s contribution to this special issue, ‘A dangerous method? The German discourse on hypnotic suggestion therapy around 1900’, *Notes Rec.* **71**, 197–211 (2017).
- 80 See *Bull. du Service de Santé et de l’Hygiène Publique*, 258 (1893), 136 (1894), 313 (1895).
- 81 Paulussen, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 142–154.
- 82 J. Crocq fils, *Comme quoi la loi sur l’interdiction des représentations publiques d’hypnotisme devrait être modifiée. Communication faite à l’Académie de médecine de Belgique* (Godenne, Namur, 1896).