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- ¹ ‘A scholar and a neurasthenic woman who comes to consult him – and there you have Terpsichore visiting a new Cagliostro.’¹ Thus we might sum up the story of the young Magdeleine G. who, around 1904, danced improvisations to music under the complicit eye of her hypnotist Émile Magnin and the Swiss photographer Frédéric Boissonnas, aka Fred Boissonnas (1858–1946). The outcome of this collaboration would be several hundred photographs intended for an exhibition and as illustrations for the book *L’Art et l’Hypnose*, which still remains the authoritative work on the subject.² One of them, a cyanotype recently discovered in the Boissonnas archives, shows the young woman full length, coiffed in the ancient manner and wearing a flowing white robe suggestive of a Greek pepulum or an Indian sari. Standing on a pedestal that is hidden by her dress, the majestic Magdeleine G., with her classically regular features and beatific smile, seems to be welcoming with outstretched arms some kind of hallucinatory vision. This image alone epitomizes the tour de force Boissonnas achieved in this series: to illustrate the medical-artistic phenomenon ‘discovered’ by Magnin, he combines the occult and the Hellenic, two points of reference that, in theory, are diametrically opposed. On the one hand, he exploits the expressive qualities of a body in a state of hypnosis, and on the other, he opts for a rational, Hellenized aesthetic. Starting with a phenomenon initially linked to fin-de-siècle mysticism, he brings balance, structure, and light to the creation of a new kind of image.
- ² Magdeleine G.’s personal story is inseparable from her meeting with the Swiss hypnotist Émile Magnin (1865–1937), a therapist and teacher at the École de Magnétisme in Paris.³ According to the official version provided by Magnin himself, the young woman came to him in 1902 for treatment of headaches ‘of nervous origin, which had resisted all attempts at cure.’⁴ Magnin quickly transformed her into a subject capable of spontaneous reaction to Frédéric Chopin’s *Marche Funèbre*, the compositions of Franz Schubert, the poetry of Paul Verlaine, and piano improvisations by famous composers. Magdeleine G.

became an artist supposedly unaware of her own talent, who claimed to have no memory of her hypnotic trances. Her dance performances, initially given in private in the studios of Boissonnas, Auguste Rodin, and Albert Besnard, were briefly but highly successful all over Europe; this was notably the case in Munich in 1904, where they were documented by court photographers, portrayed by secession painters like Albert von Keller and scrutinized by members of the Psychological Society, among them the famed physician Albert von Schrenck-Notzing. Considered an ‘artistic and psychological phenomenon of the highest order’⁵ by the admirers of her expressive, hypnotic, and slightly hysterical movements, Magdeleine G. became known in Bavaria as *Die Schlaf tänzerin* and *Die Traum tänzerin*, roughly translatable as ‘the sleep dancer’ and ‘the dream dancer.’ These scientific pseudonyms adroitly concealed the identity of a thirty-year-old mother named Emma Guipet who, born Emma Archinard in Georgia before living in Geneva and Paris,⁶ was hardly as culturally impoverished as was claimed: she had modeled herself on Isadora Duncan and received basic dance training from Émile Jaques-Dalcroze.

- 3 In his description of the ‘neurasthenic woman’ who became Terpsichore and the ‘scholar’ metamorphosed into a ‘new Cagliostro,’ the art critic Arsène Alexandre deftly put his finger on the essence of *L’Art et l’Hypnose* and its accompanying performances. The neurasthenic’s suffering is visibly transcended by the classical muse of dance, while at the same time the Sicilian healer’s dubious powers take on a new dimension, stripped of their questionable associations. The image constructed by Fred Boissonnas wiped away hypnosis’s scandalous past, and presented a far more serious and respectable view of it than those previously offered by Jules Luys in Paris and Schrenck-Notzing at the Psychological Society in Munich. An analysis of the context in which the photographic series was created reveals the importance of the Geneva photographer’s meticulous staging. At a time when hypnosis and the study of pathological forms of expression were associated with the decadent aspects of symbolism, why did Boissonnas opt for this combination of classical dress, statuary pedestal, bas-relief effects, and allusions to mythological goddesses? Within the context of this artistic, psychological, and expressive experimentation, what were the benefits of allusions to the world of Greek antiquity?

The Golden Age of Hypnosis

- 4 The reference to ancient Greece is already present in *L’Art et l’Hypnose*; Émile Magnin’s main intention in his text was the rehabilitation of hypnotism for therapeutic and artistic purposes. Asserting that sculptors like Phidias and Praxiteles had resorted to hypnotic suggestion to draw the proper intensity of expression from their models, Magnin also invoked Horace and Ovid to explain how the bacchantes and sibyls of antiquity put themselves into trances to be able to dance tirelessly and stared fixedly at objects for long periods so as to achieve ecstasy.⁷ This theory was a borrowing from James Braid, the founder of medical hypnosis, who wrote in *Neurypnology* (1843) that ‘the Greeks may well have been indebted to hypnotism for the perfection of their sculpture,’ while the bacchantes owed their ‘tendency to dance on hearing music’ to ‘the hypnotic condition or nervous sleep.’⁸ By associating hypnosis with classical antiquity, Magnin was resisting the standard discourse and saw himself as reviving age-old practices going back far beyond Franz Anton Mesmer, generally considered the founder of animal magnetism. Magnin looked for his references not to the previous century, but to a period idealized since the Renaissance, and this surrounded his work with an aura of seriousness. The cover

illustration he chose for *L'Art et l'Hypnose* states his case unambiguously with its neoclassical style. On a dark red ground, Rodolphe Schlemmer's composition alludes to a style inherited both from Greek vase motifs and Aubrey Beardsley's art nouveau drawings. Magdeleine G.'s slender silhouette is seen in back view, wreathed in decorative patterns and linked by garlands of flowers to a large rose, as if she is attached to the earth and nature by an umbilical cord – a sign of her closeness to the origins of the world.

- 5 We can assume that for the illustrations for his book, Magnin was seeking images of a kind that would allow him to justify his ideas as well as put them into practice. Given the importance he attached to Magdeleine G.'s expressive poses and their usefulness for artists, he needed a substantial body of photographic work. He was acquainted with the handsome book *Les Sentiments, la musique et le geste* (1900), just published by his colleague Albert de Rochas with the help of Nadar: an exploration of 'the externalization of sensibility'⁹ based on the hypnotic expressions of Mademoiselle Lina [de Ferkel], a professional model used by Alphonse Mucha. To achieve his project – and to compete with this exemplar – Magnin turned to Fred Boissonnas who, in addition to being a compatriot and his brother-in-law, had received international recognition thanks to a gold medal he had won at the Swiss National Exhibition in Geneva in 1896 and had extended his chain of studios from Paris to St Petersburg.¹⁰ A lover of nature and archaeology, this virtuoso practitioner of the portrait, landscape, and outdoor composition was at the cutting edge of the technology of the time and famed for his staggering output. The two, moreover, shared an interest in the Greek world: when he photographed Magdeleine G. late in the summer of 1903, Boissonnas was just back from his first trip to Greece, with his wife Augusta Magnin and his friend Daniel Baud-Bovy, a novelist and art historian. The trip would trigger a series of albums on the Parthenon, Delphi, and modern Athens, the most famous of which remains *En Grèce par monts et par vaux* (1910).
- 6 The two series on Magdeleine G. and Greece were so intimately related that a few months later Boissonnas presented a major exhibition in Geneva, comprising approximately a hundred views of 'famous sites and remote corners' of Greece, together with five hundred 'consecutive snapshots' of the young woman's improvisations. An exhibition view shows large-format images already organized in series; numerous and imposing, they had just received a favorable response in Munich, where they were sold in galleries while the *Traumtänzerin* performed at the Schauspielhaus.¹¹ Although only a few glass negatives accompanied by cyanotypes have survived¹², these photographs were instrumental in making the prodigy known to the public and to specialists, via theater magazines like *Musica* and *The Play Pictorial*, as well as in articles by the art critic Arsène Alexandre in *Paris Illustré*,¹³ the psychologist Théodore Flournoy in *Archives de Psychologie*,¹⁴ and the writer Ernst Schur in a book on modern dance.¹⁵
- 7 To those who wrote about the photographs and the theatrical performances, the classical allusions turned the dancer into a vision of enchantment. The Paris artist Hugo d'Alési, himself a medium with a gift for spontaneous painting and drawing, declared that Magdeleine G. must have already lived several previous lives and was descended 'directly from the Greeks.'¹⁶ In the weekly magazine *Gil Blas*, a journalist named Madame Séverine described the dancer as 'a statue that has emerged from the frieze of the Parthenon; she is all of Greece and all of antiquity.'¹⁷ After a performance at the Opéra-Comique in Paris another journalist, Poppy, remarked that the folds of her blue peplum resembled 'great wings at rest' and, after comparing her to the dancers in the murals of Naples and

Pompeii, concluded poetically, ‘They have the wings of Mercury on their feet.’¹⁸ In Germany the philosopher and theoretician of the theater Georg Fuchs saw in this *Traumtänzerin* an ‘artistic miracle’ reminiscent of the maenads and bacchantes, the Dionysians and flagellants – all those powerfully instinctual figures drawn from the outbreaks of mass hysteria in antiquity and the Middle Ages.¹⁹ Thus did Boissonnas’s photographs, preceding and preparing for the official performances organized by Magnin, fulfil their task of Hellenizing the image of the ‘sleep dancer’ and emphasizing her artistic character at the expense of the morbid or dubious associations hypnosis might otherwise evoke.

Getting the Message Across: From the Studio to the Outdoors

- 8 *L’Art et l’Hypnose* is a solid, well-researched work of nearly four hundred pages. From the origins of hypnotism to its current proponents, the book offers a detailed analysis of the different aspects of the Magdeleine G. case and closes with a selection of the views of the press and artists. The two hundred photographs by Boissonnas it contains represent a mix of classical references, contemporary technology, and the study of expressiveness, and can be divided into three main series according to the poses, the setting chosen – whether an interior or a real or simulated sky – and the placement of the body on a pedestal.
- 9 In the first of these series, most of the photographs show Magdeleine G. full length against a decor typically associated with the portrait genre: an oriental carpet and a blurred fresco of a section of curtain and a wooded landscape. This backdrop is indistinct enough to allow mental projection by the viewer of the text or music accompanying the hypnotic experience – an imaginative leap facilitated by the captions and musical notes sometimes placed under the illustrations. In the closing pages of *L’Art et l’Hypnose*, the thirty photographs illustrating Chopin’s *Marche Funèbre* are especially representative of the image the *Traumtänzerin* offered to the public of her time. The conventional decoration of this dark, muted interior evokes the bourgeois milieu whose social codes she had come to shatter with her uninhibited movements. Visually, the dancer’s pale silhouette and convulsive gestures contrast with the backdrop and separate her from it. In the seeming comfort of a false drawing room, she, without hesitating, stretches out on the floor in exaggerated poses, with her limbs in spasms and sometimes with a contorted face. By placing the light-colored, classical-style silhouette of his hypnotized subject in a standard studio decor, Boissonnas is referencing Nadar’s set-up for Rochas’s book *Les Sentiments, la musique et le geste*.
- 10 He does not, however, settle for a pale imitation of his Paris colleague: some years earlier he had already photographed experiments in child expressivity to illustrate a lecture by the anatomy professor Édouard Bugnion. In the tradition of the images used in Charles Darwin’s *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), he focused on these small faces weeping and laughing, trying to capture the emotions of beings thought to be expressing ‘truth, ingenuousness, sincerity’²⁰ and considered incapable of dissimulation. With the portraits of Magdeleine G., Boissonnas continued this quest for expressivity through more detailed observation of extreme gestures and various intense facial expressions, without ever showing his subject’s features in repose. Thus the young

woman, diagnosed by Bavarian doctors as somewhat hysterical, seemed more like a child or a primitive being than an artist. Indeed, as Jacqueline Carroy has shown, her supposed unawareness 'made acceptable an art emancipated from a certain technical skill and seemingly close to nature.'²¹ This characteristic, seen by some as an asset, enabled Magdeleine G. to reveal an unknown aspect of humanity, like Jean-Martin Charcot's woman patient at the Salpêtrière and Hippolyte Bernheim's in Nancy, or some exponent of art brut *avant l'heure*.

- 11 Secondly, the most striking series of photographs in *L'Art et l'Hypnose* shows Magdeleine G. against a light indeterminate backdrop frequently embellished with airy clouds. Most of these images were taken outdoor, using a system specially developed to set off her silhouette against the horizon. In one of the cyanotypes, a piano has been placed on a small mound and a cornet is pointed at the model to prevent 'dissipation of the vibrations into the atmosphere.'²² Surrounded by various male musicians, photographers, and assistants gathered under a sunshade, Magdeleine G. is first magnetized by the fluid of the 'N ray,'²³ transmitted to her by Magnin's placing of his hand on her forehead; this can be seen in an image ultimately not included in the book, but which signals the active reciprocity between the two. The caption states that this series was the opportunity to utilize the very latest telephoto lens, the Téléphot Vautier-Dufour & Schaer, which, in addition to reducing exposure time to 1/300, enabled emphasis on the silhouette via flattening of the subject, blurring of the backdrop, and creation of a bas-relief effect. Her hair and ample robe moving in the wind, Magdeleine G. is photographed half length to make her seem even more slender and majestic. With the sun accentuating the transparency of her veils and evoking the light effects used by Loïe Fuller in her serpentine dances, she interprets the melodies of *The Valkyrie* and *Il Trovatore* with movements revealing a human body 'returned to its natural state, that is to say stripped of life's contingencies, released from earthly ties, free and spontaneous, capable of emotion and expression,' as an article in *Le Monde musical* put it in 1904.²⁴ Visually, these images suggest a quasi-symbiotic relationship with the sky, supporting the idea of proximity with nature and reinforcing the theory of an instinctive translation of emotions.
- 12 A few of the images using a pale backdrop are notable for their less contrasted lighting and a lack of movement in the folds of the robe. Certainly taken in a studio, they nonetheless duplicate the sober, light-filled compositions in which the model stands out against a neutral ground. In the image titled 'Interpretation of a musical phrase inspired under hypnosis by magnetic influence on the nerve center believed to give rise to religious notions,' Magdeleine G., with eyes half-closed, advances towards the viewer like a sleepwalker, thumbs and little fingers spread apart. The misty world from which she emerges is a sky highlighted with brushwork in the pictorialist manner and reminiscent of the approach used by Robert Demachy in his contemporary image *Struggle*, published in *Camera Work* in 1904. These artificial billowings decontextualize the image, and suggest that this proudly luminous silhouette is indeed that of a woman liberated from earthly contingencies. The overall effect is of a timeless apparition, perhaps even of a medium linking the physical world to a more irrational beyond. In most of the images that comprise this series – such as the introductory image for *L'Art et l'Hypnose*, taken from the series *The Life of the Virgin Mary* – Magdeleine G. becomes an icon, a veritable Madonna. Depicted as a virtuous and emotional woman, she is shown helping Christ down from the cross, rejoicing in his apparition or kneeling before his imaginary presence. Far removed

from the *femmes fatales*, those dangerous seducers of men who were so dear to the artists of the decadent movement, Magdeleine G. is the embodiment of the natural woman and the compassionate mother. Wearing simple, flat, sometimes cross-laced ballet shoes, she modestly reveals only her arms, neck, and occasionally her underarms. The wedding ring visible on her left hand in some of the images is there, of course, as a reminder of the conjugal and family happiness which she is not fleeing, but rather separating herself from geographically in order to share her talents and serve the cause of both science and art. Dedicated to her auditory and kinesthetic intuitions, she uses no other artifice than an initially therapeutic hypnosis. Of the Madonna, the muse, and the seductress – the three feminine archetypes identified by Anne Higonnet in nineteenth-century representation²⁵ – Magdeleine G. embodies only the first two.²⁶ It was in this spirit that the Munich artist Albert von Keller painted his numerous oil-on-panel portraits of the dancer, also using her grief stricken pose for a crucifixion.²⁷

- 13 The third series shows Magdeleine G. full length, on a pedestal, against a generally neutral ground whose contours are sometimes blurred. Musical and literary references have disappeared, replaced by a simple yet varied repertoire that ranges from the four seasons to the vices, from inebriation to the edge of madness, jumbling together ‘Bad News,’ ‘Lust,’ and ‘Coquetry’ and ‘Terror.’ The personifications of ‘Winter’ and ‘Intimation of Cannibalism’ are crowned with circular haloes, created with a stencil during the printing process. With her upper body enveloped in light, the young woman resembles an icon or an easily identifiable allegory, like the figures of Dance and Music in Alphonse Mucha’s lithographed posters of 1898. According to Magnin, her poses have their origins in certain formal ‘memories’: ‘In many photographs it is possible to recognize a certain painting, illustration or statue which, via Magdeleine G.’s subconscious, has contributed to bringing the idea suggested to life.’²⁸ In addition to the Virgin Mary images, she was also able to strike attitudes alluding to the stories of Adam and Eve or Judith and Holofernes. The little pedestal, meanwhile, gave her the static, sculptural appearance of an artist’s model or even of a work of art in her own right. Like a real neoclassical statue by Pygmalion, Magdeleine G.’s body was transformed into inert matter that artists and psychiatrists were invited to animate. In the contrasting play of light that brings out the contours and shadows of her veils, she offers herself to the viewer as she waits for music and hypnosis to breathe life into her.

Isadora Duncan as a Role Model

- 14 Along with the formal devices employed by Boissonnas, Magdeleine G.’s affinities with the nymphs of antiquity were also owed a debt to other contemporaneous images created during the Hellenic vogue, such as Pierre Puvis de Chavannes’s allegories and the somber personifications of Franz von Stuck and Arnold Böcklin. In this conjunction of photography and dance, the major influence was that of the young American dancer Isadora Duncan (1877–1927), who performed barefoot in the name of the liberation of choreography. Both more or less self-taught, the two dancers had in common their Grecian robes and hairstyles, their solo performances free of props and sets, and an uncompromisingly novel use of music that drew largely on pieces for the piano. Only three years apart in age, both relied not only on an innovative improvisation but also on partial revelation of their womanliness. While Duncan jettisoned her classical ballet shoes, Magdeleine G. presented herself as a ‘hypnogirl’²⁹ to publicly expose the sensitivity

of her soul. Thus they both shattered social conventions and offered a glimpse of their intimate beings.

- 15 Early in her career, around 1901, Duncan regularly attended musical and social salons that brought together men of letters, artists, and well-known musical figures like Maurice Ravel, who played the piano for her. A trip to Greece reinforced her urge to create an aesthetic derived from the vases and bas-reliefs she had seen in European museums. After a triumphal tour of Budapest, Munich, and Berlin and publication of her manifesto *The Dance of the Future*, she gave her first Paris performance at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt: *Danses idylles*, based on works by Chopin. She was also in touch with the artists Auguste Rodin, Eugène Carrière, and Antoine Bourdelle, whom she inspired.³⁰
- 16 Magdeleine G., meanwhile, was enjoying an intense period of celebrity, notably through private and public performances in Paris, Munich, Stuttgart, London, and Berlin. During her very brief two-year career, from 1903 to 1905, her sleep-walking interpretations were a sensation with audiences that included Rodin, but more importantly, Albert von Keller, August von Kaulbach, and Hugo von Habermann, along with a host of medical specialists called in to diagnose her condition. As liberated in her movements as her American counterpart, she danced to contemporary compositions as well as to melodies by Frédéric Chopin, Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, and Johannes Brahms. The works were performed live by the theater orchestras or by famous musicians improvising for her on grand pianos. In Berlin, in addition to giving a number of performances at the Königliches Schauspielhaus, she attended the *Montagstees*, the Monday afternoon teas held by Emma Vely, a journalist-writer involved in the female emancipation movement; other guests included writers and actors such as Max Nordau (author of *Entartung*, 1893), Otto Erich Hartleben (co-editor of the magazine *Jugend*), and several women with professions of their own.³¹ Schrenck-Notzing and Albert von Keller may have seen her again in Paris, when she performed at the home of Keller's wife, Baroness Marie d'Eichthal.³²
- 17 A year apart, in Munich, the two dancers posed for photographs that were very alike in their use of light and shade: Duncan at the modern Studio Elvira and Magdeleine G. for Adolf Baumann and the Lützel brothers.³³ While the images of Duncan emphasize simple poses, minimal attire, and bare legs, Baumann's portraits of Magdeleine G. accentuate the theatrical, mystical, and somber aspects of her performances. A court photographer in Bavaria and Spain, Baumann had already taken several portraits of Mary and Franz von Stuck in Roman costume.³⁴ For the *Traumtänzerin* he chose a very different and less selective point of view than Boissonnas, one that was closer to portraits of actresses and opera singers than to antiquity-inflected silhouettes. Against the black ground of the stage, the dancer stands out like a light-body come to illuminate the audience. One of the main differences lies in the general absence of any familiar caption: rather than illustrating a piece of music, a fable, or a virtue, these images signal a creative exploration in the same vein as those typical of the late nineteenth century.

'Professor Jaques'

- 18 The point of intersection for Fred Boissonnas, Isadora Duncan, and Magdeleine G. was the musician and theoretician Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950). 'Professor Jaques' had been teaching harmony, musical theory, and advanced solfège at the conservatory in Geneva since the early 1890s. With his career only just getting under way, he was already an

iconic figure in his home city, where he was preparing a revolution in music education. Abandoning the purely theoretical approach in favor of emotion, improvisation, and bodily awareness of music, he developed 'eurhythmics' out of an association between movement and musical perception. His aim was 'to create between the brain, the ear and the larynx the circuits necessary to turn the entire organism into what could be called an interior ear.'³⁵ Founding his rhythmic system on harmony between the physical and the mental, he dreamed of a body that would act as an intermediary between sounds and thought so as to give more immediate expression to the emotions.³⁶ Rhythmic expression, he believed, lay in the polarity between tension and relaxation, between contraction and de-contraction, which he saw as a recharging of creative activity.³⁷ The future Magdeleine G., whose relaxation would be found in hypnosis, studied for a time with this innovative, charismatic teacher, who was formulating new educational goals based on the virtues of 'callisthenics.'³⁸ She then put his teachings into practice under the fascinated gaze of Magnin, Boissonnas, and Schrenck-Notzing.³⁹ The young teacher certainly knew Magdeleine G.'s uncle, Benjamin Archinard, who had choreographed *Le Poème alpestre* (1896), composed by Jaques-Dalcroze and Baud-Bovy. If these links were not made public at the time, it was because the aura of mystery surrounding the trances had to be maintained – but also, perhaps, because everyone could read between the lines when the *Journal de Genève* spoke of 'the distinguished professor from the Conservatory, who could not conceal his admiration for the spectacle taking place before him.'⁴⁰

- 19 And so, as Professor Theodor Lipps perceptively noted in Munich, hypnosis was not the sole factor in the *Traumtänzerin*'s graceful movements: as he saw it, she was perfectly aware of being hypnotized 'with a view to displaying her artistic talent'; what he detected was a form not of induced sleep, but of self-hypnosis and a 'state of intense wakefulness' that allowed a liberating loss of inhibition while endowing her with heightened awareness, lucidity and, auditory acuity.⁴¹ Lipps thus fueled the debate regarding the nature and value of these trances, widely challenged by several critics, including the doctors Albert Moll and Gustav Klein. In his book *Ästhetik* (1903–6) Lipps himself was in the process of outlining his own conception of *Einfühlung* or empathy, which examined the relationships between rhythm, space, color, sound, and word, and which Magdeleine G.'s performances, whether unconscious or semi-programmed, illustrated perfectly.
- 20 As might be expected, the hypnotic relationship between Magnin and Magdeleine G. was more a matter of mutual consent than of deliberate influence, a view borne out – without diminishing the interest of her performances – by the theories of hypnotic suggestion developed by the doctors Auguste Liébault and Hippolyte Bernheim in Nancy, in the 1880s. Beneath her air of innocence and supposed role as a mere illustrative object with no will of its own, the youthful Emma played her part in the development of Jaques-Dalcroze's methods and the Grecian aesthetic of the early twentieth century, without asserting herself to the same extent as Isadora Duncan, or claiming to be a 'new woman' or an artist. Shielded by a stage name more typical of a medical patient than a choreographer, she preached no particular message and advocated no specific values, as is clear in one of the few interviews published during her lifetime.⁴² After 1906, she faded into oblivion and despite the hundreds of photographs taken by Boissonnas, nobody but a few specialists took any interest in her during the rest of the twentieth century. Her trail peters out, tending to merge with that of the numerous imitators who pirated her stage name in various parts of Europe and have thus complicated attempts to retrace the

biography of the true sleep dancer. Later, though, the surrealists dug into the scientific literature about her and became firm admirers; and Magdeleine G. may actually have been living in Paris in 1933, when André Breton, writing in *Minotaure*, confessed his fascination with her ‘automatic dances,’ her powers as an artistic medium, and the liberating effect of her hypnotic state.⁴³

- 21 Boissonnas took his ‘snapshots’ in a context where the revitalization of dance expressed itself in nostalgia for a Hellenic past and a quest for symbiosis with nature. With his portraits of Magdeleine G., the Genevois photographer succeeded in modernizing the visual repertoire of hypnosis by combining his interests in expressive studies and ancient Greece. Beyond these formal and stylistic explorations, his photographs of her played a part in the strategy of artistic and scientific validation. Designed to avoid the association with occultism, the use of antique-style clothing provided a solid guarantee of artistic integrity. This was not, however, the visual strategy adopted by Robert Demachy when, during the same period, he used a screen and an oriental carpet as a setting for the dancer in his Paris studio. Where Boissonnas approached his subject frontally, centering her within a rectangle, Demachy – or the photographer using his studio⁴⁴ – played with oblique angles, photographing Magdeleine G. in a corner of a diffusely sky-lit room and sometimes resorting to a slightly raised camera angle that emphasizes the fleeting quality of her bodily movements. Reframings carried out during the printing process⁴⁵ enabled him to concentrate on the facial expressions and movements of the head and shoulders and sometimes allowed artistic blurring. These intensely expressive images create the impression of an actual physical struggle with the dancer and foster empathy with the emotions suggested by the music. Miles away from Boissonnas’s rational, Hellenizing agenda, they present a tangled mixture of spectral visions, feminine physicality, and fantastical dreams.
- 22 Whether as a sculpture from the Parthenon or the protagonist of occultist fantasies, Magdeleine G. helped to develop complementary aesthetic concepts that started new ideas circulating in the fields of art and science. The essayist Alfred Kerr provided the best summary of her impact on the retinas and lenses of her time: ‘Inhibitions were cast aside ...; her innermost being seemed to be turned inside out. She who is utterly emancipated, in pain and sensuality and anger, in misery and beatitude, remains indelibly etched on my gaze.’⁴⁶

NOTES

1. Arsène Alexandre, ‘Terpsichore et Cagliostro,’ *Journal du Havre* [1904], n.p.
2. Émile Magnin, *L’Art et l’Hypnose. Interprétation plastique d’œuvres littéraires et musicales* (Geneva: Atar/Paris: Alcan [1906]) Evidence of 1906 as the date of publication is found in an advertisement for new books in the *Journal de Genève* of December 16, 1906. The copy used for this article is the second edition, similar to the first and apparently published in 1907.
3. Before setting up as a hypnotist in Paris, Magnin had begun as a pharmacist in Geneva, where, in the early 1890s, he invented his ‘Magnetic Embrocation.’ As a therapist, he based his career on

magnetism. See Émile Magnin, *Devant le mystère de la névrose. De la guérison de cas réputés incurables* (Paris: Vuibert, 1920).

4. See É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 9.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Born on October 2, 1874, in Tiflis, she married the merchant Albert Guipet in Paris in 1898 and the couple had two children. 'Guipet' is revealed as her family name in Hans Rosenhagen's *Albert von Keller* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1912), 94.

7. É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 1–2 and 284.

8. Donald Robertson, ed., *The Discovery of Hypnosis: The Complete Writings of James Braid, the Father of Hypnotherapy* (York: National Council for Hypnotherapy, 2009), 300.

9. Albert de Rochas, *Les Sentiments, la musique et le geste* (Grenoble: Librairie Dauphine, 1900). See also the same author's *L'Extériorisation de la sensibilité* (Paris: Chamuel, 1895).

10. Nicolas Bouvier, 'Frédéric Boissonnas,' in *Les Boissonnas*, 74–165 (Geneva: éditions Héros-Limite, 2010).

11. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing has said that a thousand prints were on sale, and that blow-ups could be made to customer specifications. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, *Die Traumtänzerin Magdeleine G. Eine psychologische Studie über Hypnose und dramatische Kunst*, in collaboration with F.E. Otto Schultze (Naumburg) (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1904), 79.

12. The Boissonnas archives contain twenty-four 13 x 18 cm glass negatives, accompanied by cyanotypes on thin paper (Centre d'Iconographie Genevoise, BGE, inv. no. 63.000–1011). Half of them have never been published. My thanks to Ninon Boissonnas and Cléo Borel for their unstinting help.

13. Arsène Alexandre, 'Magdeleine et la Suggestion musicale,' *Paris Illustré*, February 10, 1904, pp. 12–15; reprinted in Émile Magnin and Fred Boissonnas, *Magdeleine: Étude sur le geste au moyen de l'hypnose* (Geneva: Lagier [1904]), n.p. (English translation, *Magdeleine. Gestures while in the Hypnotic State* [1904]).

14. Théodore Flournoy, 'Chorégraphie somnambulique. Le cas de Magdeleine G.,' *Archives de psychologie de la Suisse romande* 3, no. 12 (July 1904): 357–74 (Geneva: Editions Édouard Claparède and Théodore Flournoy).

15. Ernst Schur, 'Die Traumtänzerin,' *Der moderne Tanz*, 55–61 (Munich: Gustav Lammers, 1910).

16. É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 392.

17. Madame Séverine, *Gil Blas*, May 23, 1903; reprinted in É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 284.

18. Poppy, 'Vision brève à l'Opéra comique,' *Le Gaulois*, January 26, 1904; reprinted in É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 341–42.

19. Georg Fuchs, *Der Tanz* (Stuttgart: von Streker & Schröder, 1906), 24.

20. Édouard Bugnion, *Les Mouvements de la face ou le mécanisme de l'expression* (Lausanne: Georges Bridel, 1895), 15. See also Gunnar Schmidt, 'Medienkunst,' in *Das Gesicht. Eine Mediengeschichte*, 117–33 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003).

21. Jacqueline Carroy, 'Artistes inconscients, scènes magnétiques, hypnotiques et scientifiques,' in *Hypnose, suggestion et psychologie. L'invention de sujets*, 96 (Paris: PUF, 1991).

22. É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 182.

23. Considered more beneficial than hypnotism, the magnetism advocated by Magnin was founded on belief in this 'N ray' (earlier referred to as 'Reichenbach's od'), a force emanating from the body, qualitatively similar to the x-ray and discovered by Professor Blondlot in Nancy, France, in 1903. See René Blondlot, *Rayons 'N': Recueil des communications faites à l'Académie des sciences* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1904).

24. A. M., 'La marche funèbre du Crépuscule des dieux,' *Le Monde musical*, January 15, 1904, p. 2

25. Anne Higonnet, 'Representations of Women,' trans. Arthur Goldhammer, in *History of Women in the West*, vol. 4, *Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, 306–18 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993).
26. For a completely different interpretation, see Don Lacoss, 'Our Lady of Darkness: Decadent Arts and the Magnetic Sleep of Magdeleine G.' in *Neurology and Literature, 1860–1920*, ed. Anne Stiles, 52–73 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
27. Gian Casper Bott, *Albert von Keller. Salons, Séances, Secession*, exhibition catalogue, Kunsthau Zurich (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2009), ill. 27 and 28, p. 159.
28. É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 199.
29. Sparklet, [untitled], *écho de Paris*, January 31, 1904.
30. Juliette Laffon, Hélène Pinet, Stéphanie Cantarutti et al., *Isadora Duncan. Une sculpture vivante*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Musée Bourdelle (Paris: Paris-Musées, 2009).
31. Petra Wilhelmy, *Der Berliner Salon im 19. Jahrhundert (1780-1914)* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1989), 369–73, 873–77.
32. Albert von Keller, unpublished biographical notes quoted in Ulrich Linse, 'Mit Trancemedien und Fotoapparat der Seele auf der Spur,' in *Trancemedien und neue Medien um 1900: Ein anderer Blick auf die Moderne*, ed. Marcus Hahn and Erhard Schüttpelz, 97–144 (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).
33. É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), contains one photograph by Adolf Baumann (1859–?) and one by the brothers Christian (1859–?) and Friedrich (1861–?) Lützel (pp. 54 and 237). My thanks to Andreas Fischer and Dr Ulrich Pohlmann for their help in identifying these photographs.
34. Ulrich Pohlmann et al., *Franz von Stuck und die Photographie*, exhibition catalogue, Munich, Museum Villa Stuck (Munich: Prestel, 1996), 31, 46–47.
35. Henri Bochet, *Le Conservatoire de musique de Geneva. Son histoire de 1835 à 1935* (Geneva: Imprimerie du Journal de Geneva, 1935), 79.
36. Valentina Anker, 'Spiritisme, hypnose, parallélisme et les débuts de la psychanalyse: De Théodore Flournoy à Sigmund Freud,' in *Der Schweizer Symbolismus [2009]*, translated from *Le Symbolisme suisse* (Bern: Benteli, 2009), 141–57.
37. Claire-Lise Dutoit-Carlier, 'Le créateur de la rythmique,' in *Émile-Jaques Dalcroze. L'homme, le compositeur, le créateur de la rythmique*, ed. Frank Martin et al., 316–412 (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1965).
38. Jules Cougnard, 'Émile Jaques-Dalcroze et Nina Faliero-Dalcroze,' in *Le Nouveau Panthéon*, illustrations by Godefroy and Fred Boissonnas, 33 (Geneva: Société d'Affiches et de Réclames Artistiques Sonor, 1908).
39. Emma Archinard's name can be found in the archives of the Geneva conservatory of music between 1885 and 1894. She enrolled for classes and examinations for the piano, singing, advanced solfège, accompaniment, diction, and harmony, and attended Jaques-Dalcroze's classes for almost two years.
40. Édouard Claparède, 'Le geste dans l'hypnose,' *Le Journal de Genève*, May 12, 1904, p. 2.
41. Theodor Lipps, 'Die Schlaftänzerin,' *Freistatt*, no. 9, 1904; reprinted in É. Magnin, *L'Art et l'Hypnose* (note 2), 360–63.
42. Detta Zilcken, 'Die Schlaftänzerin Magdeleine,' *Die Schönheit*, 1904, pp. 49–55, quoted in Anna Börner, 'Die Schlaftänzerin Magdeleine Guipet. Eine Studie über Hypnose und Kunst um 1900' (thesis, University of Lüneburg, October 2004), 109.
43. André Breton, 'Le message automatique,' *Minotaure*, December 1933, nos. 3–4: 55–65.
44. My thanks to Julien Faure-Conorton for confirming the Robert Demachy connection. For other reproductions of images from the same series, see Andreas Fischer and Veit Loers, *Im Reich der Phantome, Fotografie des Unsichtbaren*, exhibition catalogue, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach, Kunsthalle Krems, Fotomuseum Winterthur (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1997), 100–101; G.C. Bott, *Albert von Keller* (note 27), 158–59.

45. The plates at the Société Française de Photographie (SFP) bear border strips that may have indicated the planned enlargement (Paris: Société Française de Photographie, inv. no. 99 PN 101, 101bis and 102).

46. Alfred Kerr [Alfred Kempner], 'Magdeleine G.' [February 8, 1905], *Gesammelte Schriften. Das neue Drama*, vol. 5, *Das Mimenreich* (Berlin: Fischer, 1917), 486. The author would like to thank Arno Renken for his help with the translation from the German.

ABSTRACTS

In the early twentieth century the Genevois photographer Fred Boissonnas took five hundred photographs of the automatic dances of a young woman known as Magdeleine G. These images were commissioned to illustrate the hypnotist Émile Magnin's book *L'Art et l'Hypnose*. Presented alongside views of ancient Greek sites at an exhibition in 1904, they transformed the visual range of hypnosis photography, previously restricted to occultism and playing with light and shade. Merged with the Hellenizing trend of the turn of the century, the images display a mix of classical references, up-to-date technology, and the exploration of expressivity. Posing outdoor for a telephoto lens or indoor on a pedestal that imbued her with a sculptural quality, Magdeleine G. gave free rein to emotions inspired by the music of Chopin, Wagner, and Schubert. Initially presented as an artist unaware of her own talent, it becomes clear that, hardly culturally impoverished as was claimed, she had been a pupil of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and bore some resemblances to the American dancer Isadora Duncan.