

# A TYPOLOGY OF DOMESTICATION IN EXORCISM

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*In this article the authors develop a typology that maps the way in which contemporary exorcist practices become 'domesticated'. The typology is based on a comparison of Dutch charismatic Christians and Brazilian Spiritists, two religious contexts in which dealing with evil spirits takes a central place. The typology makes clear that the discourses surrounding demons and exorcism, including the medical discourse, are made up of different practical parameters of diagnosis and treatment, which are intrinsically linked to the use of language. Metaphorical and metonymical language form two extremes of the continuum in this respect, the former representing a 'domesticated' demonology and the latter referring to the untamed reality of the demonic world.*

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## Introduction

Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and movements are in expansion in the globalizing world. Exorcism is part of their practice and contributes to their attraction. Both spirit possession and exorcism represent strong and dramatic religious experiences that, to many believers, form an important element in their faith. In a Jamesian tradition, these experiences represent a significant and proper object for study. In the psychology of religion, exorcism has received some attention, often in the context of other themes such as cults, Satanism and conversion (see, for example, Hood et al. 1996; Malony and Southard 1992; Ross 1995). In psychological anthropology, spirit possession has been a classic topic, and, by derivation, exorcism has also received attention (Goodman 1988 for a summary).

In studying US Catholic Charismatics, another psychological anthropologist, Thomas Csordas, developed the notion of the 'domestication' of exorcist violence (Csordas 1994, 165–199). Domestication is, in Csordas' view, a strategy that the exorcists he studied were following. He uses the term with two meanings: first of all in the obvious sense that through deliverance dangerous spirits are domesticated by healers (Csordas 1994, 174–175), but second also in the sense that, since the beginning of the Catholic Charismatic renewal in the USA,

deliverance itself is in a process of domestication. 'From the Charismatic standpoint, making deliverance less wild was making it less "violent", and hence more in tune with the motives of "peace, love, and joy" in ritual practice' (Csordas 1994, 168). It also means a shift in 'discernment', as Pentecostals and Charismatics use to call their appraisal of a situation, which focuses more on inner 'wounds' than on external evil (Csordas 1994, 179). Exorcist practice changes accordingly. Domestication appears to be an adaptation of a Pentecostal practice from a lower-class to a middle-class habitus (Csordas 1994, 179).

In order to contribute to the study in the psychology of religion of the experience of exorcism, and alongside to develop a preliminary typology of domestication in exorcism, we, as anthropologists of religion, analyse two cases of exorcism. One is taken from a Dutch Evangelical Charismatic context, and the other from a Brazilian Spiritist group. We do not intend to favour either an inductive or a deductive approach, but explore the plausibility that the two cases with which we are acquainted can lend to a typology. Consequently, the proposed typology is tentative. Yet we suggest that this unrepresentative way of comparing cases, precisely by its qualitative characteristics, can nevertheless lead to a convincing result.

Somewhat more can be said regarding the two cases. Compared with US Catholic Charismatics, Protestant exorcists are depicted as more dramatic and less domesticated (Csordas 1994, 168, 174–179). It therefore seems appropriate to use a case of Protestant exorcism. But exorcism is not an exclusive characteristic of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and churches, it occurs elsewhere as well. The Brazilian case is therefore included, to widen the perspective represented by the Charismatic experience and to make us aware of possible other typological criteria than those proper to the Charismatic context.

Processes of domestication can be found among Dutch Evangelical Charismatics. In their case an important aspect of domestication is the move toward the depersonalization of evil. The domestication of deliverance can be seen as a process that moves in the direction of a scientific—including psychological—discourse about spiritual affliction that is more acceptable to secular society. This can in part be explained by the increasing professionalization of the healing ministry in the Dutch case studied here. Nowadays it is not uncommon to meet Charismatic deliverance experts who are trained as professional psychotherapists (Csordas 1994, 168).

In the Brazilian case, such professionalization is present from the start because of the role of medical doctors and other academics in this Spiritist group, and also because the group's leader had expressly presented the method developed in his group as a new science and an important step forward in medical science. These Spiritists thus acted in the best Spiritist tradition, reflecting its popularity in the nineteenth century as a Romanticist reaction against over-materialistic Enlightenment and causality thinking (Hanegraaff 1996, 419–440). This context makes it all the more interesting to see how violent or domesticated

the performances are in this group. Although academics themselves, its members at the same time distrust current science.

Besides, with or without professionalization, domestication may include a tendency in the direction of metaphorization (Csordas 1994, 174), turning what is real at first into something that is experienced as a more symbolic and indirect expression. In looking for criteria for our typology, we suggest that religious experience can be situated on a spectrum that includes the directly experienced real at one extreme, and explicitly mediated experience at the other pole. Thus much depends on the degree to which tropes appear to mediate the experience that the person has of the reality that he or she is living, including religious experience.

One is reminded of Geertz's terms, when he states that religious conceptions are clothed 'with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic' (1973, 90). Of course, religious spokespersons usually emphasize the directness of sacred manifestations, ignoring or denying any human role through mediating tropes, although a certain awareness of the relevance of metonyms and metaphors can be found among believers as well. From an etic point of view religious experience is not sufficiently characterized by a reference to the uniquely realistic, not even in analysing a believer's seemingly unmediated emic version. As Fernandez (1986, 31) has observed, metaphors always suggest a movement between two separate and by themselves unconnected domains; one that provides the clarifying image, and the other inchoate and in need of clarification. In contrast to metaphors, metonyms refer to one domain only, in which the image is usually *pars pro toto* for the whole of the domain. Metonymic images then seem to appear in the middle of the spectrum and metaphoric representation at the extreme of explicit mediation in the spectrum, opposite the unmediated real.

It may seem that the outsider's view can be characterized as predominantly metaphoric, and the insider's view as either at least metaphoric, or more directly metonymic, or even stronger as fully realistic, as a denotation, no trope or image or connotation meant. Poewe has suggested that 'While academia seems preoccupied with text and genre, and the rarefied world of metaphor, many at the grass roots level have returned to experience, "life," and a language empowered by metonyms' (1989, 375). To secularized academics, a category of scholars with which William James had polemics, it seems more secure to use metaphor as an analytical and explanatory tool, because that trope safeguards and legitimates the outsider's view of religion. Religion is then understood as an artificial and even illusory link between domains that, according to scientific criteria, cannot empirically be connected in 'reality', not as cause and consequence nor as co-occurring phenomena. In contrast the one-domain view of metonym allows believers to maintain their experience that reality is under the spell of the sacred.

The believer's ultimate step beyond the mediation by tropes is to take experienced reality—consciously or not—as reality itself, without any intermediary image involved, be it metaphoric or—closer to this realist perspective—metonymic. The moods and motivations are then uniquely realistic indeed. In other words, the step from metaphor to metonym has as its logical continuation

the view of reality not mediated by tropes, but presenting itself as mere—yet full—reality. Moving through this triple distinction from one extreme to the other, what is supernatural to the outsider becomes natural to the insider.<sup>1</sup>

In our attempt to build a typology of domestication we have—in a grounded theory fashion—alternated between the cases and five pre-formulated criteria that constitute exorcist practice; that is, demonology, aetiology, diagnostics, tropes and ritual. When searching for a typology of exorcism and the degree of domestication, one criterion must be demonological, referring to the wild or violent nature of possession by spirits that are considered evil, and to the aetiology that is presented, in our cases either by Charismatics or by Spiritists. Demonology and aetiology together influence the diagnostics that govern the treatment given. As suggested above, special attention must be given to the use of tropes. And as a matter of course the ritual forms that represent the framework for exorcism must be included in a typology.

But before developing such a typology, we will first describe the Charismatic and Spiritist examples of exorcism. We then make a comparison and propose our typology of domestication in exorcist praxis.

### **Charismatic Exorcism: A Charismatic Healing Ministry**

In The Netherlands, charismatic healing ministries have developed since the late 1970s within the expanding circuit of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (Versteeg 1995). Ministries grew out of the work of individual healing specialists working within churches, or of individual believers practicing healing in the privacy of their homes. Most healing ministries are independent because they usually operate outside the authority of churches and because they have an interdenominational focus, drawing their clientele from a variety of Christian churches. Organizations may vary considerably in size and scope.

The healing ministry in this case, New Life, was started in 1987 by Robert, a recently retired psychologist and a Baptist believer.<sup>2</sup> When New Life started, Robert became its part-time director; and after his retirement, Robert started working full time for the ministry, with the help of eight volunteers, all of them former clients. The ministry offers pastoral services on an ambulant basis, mostly at the homes of clients. Apart from individual therapy, New Life organizes weekend retreats and has initiated several prayer groups, who convene monthly in the homes of (ex)clients. Every three months, a study day for clients and New Life adherents is held, which is a meeting of worship, Bible teaching, and a time of prayer with laying on of hands. Study days are attended by approximately 40 people. New Life's expenses are mainly paid through the financial support of (ex)clients, who receive a free newsletter every two months (approximately 200 addresses). New Life strives to offer high-quality care to its clients, integrating secular psychotherapy into its method. The ministry estimates that 10 per cent of its clients have problems with demonic forces, and deliverance is therefore a common healing practice.

New Life employs a variety of approaches to individual spiritual affliction, ranging from Bible teaching, to therapeutic consultations, to exorcism. The combination of psychology and prayer is founded on a holistic perspective on healing, which sees an interrelation between mind, body and spirit. To many of its clients, New Life means much more than just a Christian form of therapy. Clients have often seen their lives changed through a dramatic form of evangelical Christianity, and to some of them the New Life healing ministry is a fellowship of like-minded believers. New Life's average client is a part-time working woman between 30 and 45, married with children, who lives in an average urbanized town. She has received vocational training and is an evangelically inclined member of a mainline Protestant church.

### *Charismatic Christianity*

Charismatic Christianity started as a specific branch of American evangelicalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. The present situation of charismatic Christianity shows a rich diversity of churches, movements and doctrines (Csordas 1980). It includes Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal and neo-Evangelical denominations with a membership of tens of millions of people worldwide, as well as the Charismatic Renewal in the mainline churches. Pentecostalism reached The Netherlands as early as 1907, although it was rather marginal until the late 1950s and early 1960s, when healing revivals by foreign evangelists attracted much attention. The Charismatic Renewal became influential during the 1960s and 1970s, forming a separate network of charismatic believers in the mainline churches.

New Life has no formal ties to either Pentecostal churches or Charismatic Renewal groups. At the beginning of the 1990s, New Life was influenced by the ministry of John Wimber, leader of the Vineyard churches until his death in 1997. Several clients and volunteers from New Life visited Dutch conferences with John Wimber. Aspects of Wimber's practice of 'power healing', with its emphasis on lay participation and practical methods of prayer (see Wimber 1985), have been integrated into New Life's ministry.

Central to the charismatic belief system is the experience of being 'born again' in a relationship with Jesus Christ, and the actualization of a 'First Century Christian schema', the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the present-day church (Poewe 1989, 364). This schema emphasizes experience and can be seen as a protest against secular medical dichotomies, such as body/mind and matter/spirit. Paradoxically, the schema leads, in its turn, to theological dualism as well, although this should be understood within a holistic model of interdependence. For example, matter and spirit, while being distinct phenomena with their own sets of rules, are interrelated and affect each other. As such, the schema is metonymically holistic rather than metaphorically dualistic.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is seen as a personal experience of being baptized in or filled with the Spirit. As a consequence of this experience believers

receive the charismata or gifts of the Spirit; that is, glossolalia, healing, prophecy, and discernment of spirits. Living from this experience of the Spirit also means that reality is gradually revealed as being spiritual in its essence. Thus believers step behind the scenes of a visible stage and enter the 'spiritual world', which is the realm of God and his angels, but of the evil spirits as well.

Although demonology always has played an important role in charismatic Christian belief, it was not until the 1970s that deliverance developed into a specialized practice (see Hammond and Hammond 1973). In The Netherlands, in particular, the work of the late Dutch Reformed minister Willem van Dam has been influential (Van Dam 1973). Demonic affliction, or demonization as it is often called, is seen as an aspect of Satan's attempt to control and enslave people. Within this picture, demons are seen as personal beings with will and intelligence. They are restless entities with a totally evil nature, and a constant desire to oppress people and take control of their lives. Demons reveal themselves as specific weaknesses or vices, such as addiction or feelings of rejection. The reality of the demonic world is something of which non-believers are unaware, but in which believers engage themselves through the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer learns to see and discern the spiritual reality behind its natural appearance, and receives faith to speak words of power to encounter evil.

Charismatic Christians understand healing and exorcism as signs that accompany the proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Mark 16: 17–18). They state that every believer has the authority in the Holy Spirit to deliver people from evil. Deliverance is often promoted as a Christian duty 'to set the captives free'. In practice, however, not all believers engage in this ministry, which is often considered as difficult and even dangerous. The ministry of deliverance requires training and experience, and deliverance specialists often have specific gifts that make them suitable to do it. Robert, for example, apart from having other charismata, is believed to have the rare gift of discerning demonic affliction through smell.

### *Deliverance Techniques*

In the work of New Life, exorcism may take place at several occasions (e.g. individual therapy sessions, during study days, and in retreats). Demonic affliction is mostly treated by a team of praying believers, which is the same procedure as with the treatment of non-demonic problems. Cases of demonic affliction that are deemed 'heavy' are always treated by a team. Mixed male–female prayer teams are common, except in cases where the affliction is related to delicate problems, such as sexual abuse (most often female) or sexual 'impurity' (most often male). The majority of the members of prayer teams are believers who are longer involved with New Life, but newcomers may also be invited to join.<sup>3</sup>

Two religious techniques are central to the ministry of deliverance: discernment and authoritative speech. Discernment is seen as a spiritual gift in which God reveals the nature of a problem, whether it has a natural or a spiritual cause, and whether it has a good or an evil source. Diagnosis is complex, however,

because problems with natural causes may coincide with demonic attachments. For example, someone may struggle with feelings of rejection, which is diagnosed as having an origin in the childhood of the client. Demons, however, may use this problem to keep the person captivated in this feeling. In this case, deliverance is also required, apart from emotional healing. When clients admit to having been involved in occult activities, or have been engaged in 'impure' sexual activities, deliverance is seen as the only appropriate measure, no matter what the actual problem is.<sup>4</sup>

Authoritative speech, in turn, rests on the spiritual authority of the believer who feels guided by the Spirit. Exorcism is the speaking of power through which a situation is spiritually transformed; binding and expelling demons, and bringing a person and his personal environment 'under the blood of Christ', which means proclaiming God's protection to the afflicted.

### *Treatment*

The ministry of deliverance knows a simple procedure. After demonic influences have been detected, the client is asked for specific details of his problem, and the information given is used by the prayer team to know more specifically how to act and pray. It should be noted that, although the person in question may be aware of a certain problem, the demonic nature of the problem is most often identified within the context of the ministry (Csordas 1990). The session begins with a prayer for protection for the client and the team. The client is seen as particularly vulnerable, since he/she is inhabited by an alien spirit that may take any course of action to remain inside the afflicted body. In some cases, chairs are removed and clients are said to lie down on the floor, for fear that they might harm themselves under the influence of the evil spirit. But the team members may be vulnerable as well, because there is always the risk of 'contagion' through engaging in exorcism. In the moment of prayer, God and Jesus are praised and their deeds are remembered; in particular, the suffering and resurrection of Christ as the crucial victory over Satan. The defeat of Satan and his agents is stressed, stating the fact that evil may still be active in the world but that it is nothing more than the final stage in the battle that Christ has already won. Important is the proclamation of the blood and name of Jesus, which contain the actual power to overcome evil spirits, and which subsequently demonstrate the authority of the believers. A typical phrase is: 'Jesus, we praise you for your mighty blood and your powerful name, through which we have authority to step on serpents'. The elements of praise and the 'proclamation' of God's power will be repeated throughout the exorcism session, yet when the moment of deliverance has come the verbal focus shifts from God to demons. God is not asked to remove the evil spirits but the spirits are commanded by the believers to leave the afflicted person. The demon may be addressed and identified as the cause of the problem—for example, a spirit of addiction—or the problem is simply named and addressed—for example: 'Addiction, I command you to leave this person in the name of Jesus'.

The afflicted is often mentioned as well, stating that he/she is a child of God and therefore 'covered' with the blood of Christ, which should make clear that the demon has no right to keep the person in bondage. For example: 'Addiction, I command you to leave X, in the name of Jesus. He is a child of God and covered with the blood of Christ. You have no ownership of his life. Get out, in the name of Jesus'.

Apart from the continuing commands to the demons to 'get out' and the repeated reference to the 'blood' and name of Jesus, Bible verses may be read that speak of the power of God. There is a clear sense that the speaking of these words is essential in a situation of deliverance. Words contain immediate power and change the power balances between good and evil. Speaking words in faith releases God's power to break the power of evil, and this power of the word is also demonstrated in the form of glossolalia and the singing of praise songs. Both glossolalia and praise singing are believed to have a direct effect on the deliverance. Glossolalia is understood as the language of the Holy Spirit; it is the Spirit of God speaking through the believer. Speaking in tongues is thus seen as a supernatural act that makes the boundary between the spiritual and natural worlds disappear. In this way, speech becomes supernatural and intervenes in the actions of good and evil forces. Similarly, praising is believed to represent the power of God in an immediate way.

The exorcism may take some time, dependent on the amount of spirits present and their actual resistance to leave the person. This also means that the team must be aware when a person is delivered. Signs of release may be expressed through sighing and coughing, or in 'heavy' cases through vomiting. Often team members receive the assurance that the person is delivered, and they will ask for his/her affirmation whether this is the case. The afflicted may feel relief, experienced as the loss of a burden, a light feeling, or indeed as something leaving the body.

The session is closed with a prayer for protection for the team and the client, but before that an evaluation takes place in which the client receives counsel how to keep demonic influences from his life in the future. This often also involves encouragement to the client to strengthen his faith and to become involved in a local church. Relationships with other believers are seen as important for the spiritual protection of the client.

### *Spiritual Warfare*

Exorcism is the most practical and dramatic aspect of what Charismatic Christians call 'spiritual warfare'. Although invisible in the 'natural' sense, the spiritual war between good and evil permeates every aspect of existence on earth; conflicts, misconduct, but also diseases and natural disasters are all believed to be the direct or indirect outcome of demonic influences. For some believers, this demonological worldview is a paradigm rather than a doctrine, which relates to most aspects of belief and experience. Spiritual warfare provides believers with a specific lens on and ordering of reality, and as such it has become very elaborate both as belief and technique. Spiritual warfare has spawned a new genre



in Christian literature as well (for example, Peretti 1986), which reflects demonological beliefs but at the same time creates new ideas about the spiritual world. On a personal level believers may have a strong awareness of a spiritual struggle, and even may feel they have an active part in it through public and private rituals (e.g. through praise singing and praying). Over the past 10 years the idea of territorial spirits has become more popular, claiming that cultural regions, nations, and cities are occupied by evil forces. This belief has led to the idea of 'spiritual mapping', whereby believers detect spiritual influences in certain geographical areas, diagnose the nature of the influence, and plan to clean the area through 'strategic prayer'. In this way, local and trans-local problems are traced to an invisible but powerful spiritual reality, which is then expelled by the praying warriors.

We will now turn to the second example of exorcism. As will be shown, there are remarkable phenomenological similarities, despite striking differences between the systems of thought.

### **Spiritist Exorcism: The Casa do Jardim Group**

In the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, the members of a Spiritist healing group, although working within the traditions of Spiritism, used exorcism techniques of their own invention in their treatment of patients. The founder and leader of the group, Dr José Lacerda de Azevedo, a medical doctor, expected these techniques to become the medical science of the twenty-first century (Lacerda de Azevedo 1988). His methods had been adopted by a few Spiritist groups in other regions of Brazil. The members of the Porto Alegre group, predominantly white, with many more female than male spirit mediums, belonged mainly to the middle and upper classes. Many had received a university education. All age categories between 25 and 75 were represented among them.

The group, having between 30 and 40 members in the 1980s and 1990s (when Droogers did fieldwork in this group), started work in 1966, then using as its premises a house in the garden of the Spiritist hospital of Porto Alegre. The group was called after this house: Casa do Jardim (Garden House).

### *Kardecist Spiritism*

Although not belonging to the orthodox wing of Kardecism, as Brazilian Spiritism is often called, after the founder of French Spiritism Allan Kardec (1803–1869), the Casa do Jardim group considered itself part of Spiritism. In fact, many of its views on exorcism cannot be understood without some knowledge of Kardecism. Modern Spiritism began in 1848 in Hydesville, in the State of New York, when two daughters from the Fox family affirmed that they had established a form of communication with spirit entities. In the years that followed, the techniques of communication with spirits became more sophisticated and mediums began to incorporate spirits. The phenomenon of spirits that manifested themselves also

became popular in Europe. The Brazilian elite at the time was heavily influenced by French culture and thus Kardec's books became bestsellers in Brazil. Whereas Kardec's ideas are nowadays only shared by a small minority in France, Kardecism still is one of Brazil's major religions. Until 1985 11 million copies of his six books had been sold in Brazil.

The basic notion of Spiritism is of course that spirits do exist, can incorporate in mediums, and can be communicated with. Spirits were created by God, who as a supreme intellect created reality. God's creation is subjected to a process of moral evolution. Jesus and other religious founders have, as spirits of a superior level, contributed to moral progress. In European Spiritism, differing from American so-called spiritualism, the ideas of reincarnation and of karma are essential to the person's moral evolution. With each incarnation, in this world or on another planet, a spirit arrives at a higher moral level. Progress is reached through love and charity. The moral debt built up in former lives through immoral conduct is thus diminished.

In the Casa do Jardim group, reincarnation also served as a means to understand affliction. Present suffering had its cause in an earlier life. The evil done by the patient in that former incarnation led the spirit of the victim to seek revenge in this incarnation, thus causing trouble in its tormentor's current life, the trouble usually remaining the same. Apart from 'black magic' as a cause, attributed to the Afro-Brazilian cults, the reference to karma was the most common explanation of a person's worries. A bad karma makes a person vulnerable to obsession and to 'black magic'. Affliction in this life could be in atonement for trouble caused in a former life. Regardless of this heritage from former lives, each person has the free choice to develop his or her potential for progress.

Spiritism appears to propose a dualist view of reality, distinguishing between spirit and matter, soul and body, good and evil, the invisible and the visible, the eternal and the temporary, the immortal and the mortal. Yet this dualism contains a clear asymmetry. At the end of humanity's evolution, the first term of each of these pairs will predominate. Even the most evil spirit carries a fraction of goodness and is therefore able to follow the course of moral evolution. Spiritist dualism therefore is temporal. Consequently, in moral terms it is not without a bridge for the transition between the opposites of good and evil, of mind and matter.

More than Kardec himself, Brazilian Kardecists emphasized healing as a task of Spiritists. 'Disobsession' is the term used for part of this healing process, in which the obsessing spirit is urged to sever the link with the obsessed person. Disobsession is not only a way of helping the patient, but it also comes to the assistance of the spirit obsessor in its moral evolution. Healing is not just taken to be a religious activity, but as we saw already it is considered comparable with academic medical healing, and even superior to it. Part of Spiritism's attraction, for example to the intellectuals in the Casa do Jardim group, is that Kardec considered it to be not only a religion but also a science and a philosophy.

### *Healing Techniques*

Each of the healing teams in the Casa do Jardim had a medical doctor among its members. Despite the presence of a doctor, the techniques used were not of the academic type. Mediums played a central role. One member, usually a person not gifted with mediumship, served as the coordinator of the team's work, dialoguing with the patient and with the spirits that presented themselves. Besides, each team was supposed to be guided by a spirit doctor of a high academic level who often incorporated one of the experienced mediums and offered advice. Love and charity, as means on the way to moral progress, are the basic motives for this new science of healing, this despite the academic presentation.

In the case of the Casa do Jardim, some elements have been added to the Kardecist heritage. Thus a special healing resource was used, considered to go back to the Egypt of the Pharaohs. Dr Lacerda and several mediums were said to have been incarnated then and there, and to have been trained as magicians. In our times, they were recognized as such by spirits of a high level who manifested themselves through mediums in sessions of the group. The powers obtained at that time had been preserved until the present day. At the beginning of each session a mental pyramid of protection was raised as a magnetic shield above the building where the group met.

### *Treatment*

The best way to give an idea of the group's method is to describe how the teams of the Casa do Jardim group treated the patients. Each Saturday morning the group's work was open to the general public. Lower-class and middle-class women between 30 and 50 years old formed the majority of those who sought relief in the Casa do Jardim. A minority of them were relatives or friends of the group members. Some of the group's practicing medical doctors sent a few of their patients to the Saturday sessions.

The patient was received by a team of about six to eight people. No fee was charged. The team's coordinator maintained the dialogue with the patient and with the obsessing spirit. Initially the patient was asked to explain what was troubling him or her. Medical problems predominated, often treated elsewhere already but without success. But other afflictions were also brought to the Casa do Jardim, such as marital problems, unemployment and general lack of well-being.

When the patient had explained the purpose of his or her visit, a mental 'radar', as this technique was called, was used by the team members to explore the patient's spiritual context and to 'open' his or her 'frequency'. Each person was said to have a specific vibration pattern with a particular frequency. This frequency was related to the moral level. Evil persons and spirits were supposed to have a low frequency. People with the same frequency were said to be within the same *faixa* or band. In the case of a low frequency, one spoke of a 'heavy band'. As a rule an obsessing spirit was viewed as being in the same band as his victim,

in symbiosis with that person whose frequency he may have lowered, thus causing trouble to that person.

Once located, the spirit manifested itself through one of the mediums in the team who had been concentrating on that particular frequency and then incorporated the spirit. In some cases 'black magic' was detected, operated by a malign spirit, generally associated with the priests of one of the local Afro-Brazilian religions, *batuque*. In fact 'black' had racial and sometimes racist connotations in that *batuque* was considered a black people's religion, even though white people might go there to participate or to pay for some magic to be done against another person. In any case the karmic position of the patient was considered weak, making the person vulnerable.

The treatment of the patient consisted, in fact, of a treatment given to the obsessing spirit. Therefore the dialogue with this spirit was important. When an obsessing spirit manifested itself (usually male spirits), its first statement was normally that the patient was in its power and that it would not let him or her go. More often than not the spirit ridiculed the team's powers and presented itself as invincible. It boasted a lot of allies, more powerful and even more dangerous and evil than itself. In a counter-attack, the mediums, using their mental radar, discovered whole armies and military bases. Often the obsessing spirit provided a motive for its actions. If not an agent of black magic, it usually acted by itself, seeking revenge for ill done to it by the present patient, when living together in a former incarnation. Sometimes the setting of that earlier life was described.

Obsessing spirits were viewed as spirits stuck on their way to moral evolution. They were considered as refusing to incarnate and caught in the process of seeking revenge. Some were interpreted as being of such a low level that they enjoyed committing evil. If beyond recuperation by human efforts, they were sent back to where they came from. But usually the resisting spirit was supposed to have a kernel of good, since evolution is viewed as moral progress for all.

The major task of the Casa do Jardim group was to educate this type of spirit. It was approached with a variety of attitudes: irony, scorn, persuasion, promises, straightforward love, or an appeal for conversion in the name of Jesus. In all cases the purpose was to convince it that it should proceed on its way to moral perfection and be reincarnated. If possible all the allies present behind the obsessing spirit were collected as well, and put on the course for reincarnation. This sometimes meant that they were sent to a hospital in the spirit world where medical doctors of supreme level were to treat them and heal them. One way to oblige a spirit to leave the body of its victim or that of a medium was a gesture similar to Charismatic treatment by the laying on of hands and also by blowing, in this case in the person's ear.

Among the basic techniques used to influence the spirits' behaviour was that of counting. Lacerda got this idea from a visiting medium who suggested that one should count as many times as a patient's age. Lacerda said he discovered that counting could be done independently of the patient's age and that each number counted was a way of mentally transmitting energy. A negative count

reduced energy. The technique of positive counting was used to bring people and spirits to a higher level, the negative one to reduce the strength of evil spirits, but also to bring mediums back to normal levels after having worked with higher spirits.

*The War Between Good and Evil*

All healing activities were viewed as being part of a spiritual struggle, the big war between good and evil. Mediums that helped to save spirits added to their own moral situation and thus paid debts for evil done in former lives. Because of the coming of the twenty-first century, the war between good and evil was considered to be in a critical phase. Lacerda and his fellow-members of the Casa do Jardim believed that the world was experiencing a transition that had happened before on another planet, Capella. Lower spirits from that planet were collectively sent to our planet, with a mission to civilize it. Until that spirit invasion, only 'primitive' people had inhabited the Earth. It was in this way that the world's 'civilizations', including Atlantis, were founded, at a lower level as far as Capella was concerned, but at a high level for the earth's standards at the time. According to the members of the Casa do Jardim, the world was experiencing now what occurred on Capella then: a 'hygienic' purification by which lower spirits from the earth were taken to another planet, leaving the world to higher spirits.

**A Typology of Domestication**

As the examples of Dutch Charismatics and Brazilian Spiritists show, exorcist practices are connected with a belief system and basic religious experiences, as a way of indirectly controlling and cleaning people's minds. This suggests a number of criteria. The criteria also show the varied modes for the domestication of exorcism. With regard to each criterion we distinguish four different positions or types that are located on an axis that connects a religious wild extreme with a scientific domesticated extreme. We are aware of the overlap between categories and, although we create a table with 20 slots, we might as well have summarized our findings on a spectrum with a more fluid transition between the four types. We suggest five criteria, using our etic interpretations of emic descriptions:

- A *demonological* criterion: What is the nature of evil? Is it personal or impersonal, spiritual or human?
- An *aetiological* criterion: How can affliction be explained? What spiritual or natural causes can be determined?
- A *diagnostical* criterion: How can the true cause be established? How are spirits discovered? Are there obvious medical causes?
- A *tropical* criterion: Are actors conscious of the role of tropes? What tropes do play a role and to what degree? Is reality experienced directly as it is, or via tropes? If directly, is its interpretation religious or secular in nature? If through tropes, what role do metaphors play and what role is reserved for metonyms?

**TABLE 1**  
Exorcists' typology of domestication of exorcism

	<b>Spiritual</b>	<b>Spiritual–natural</b>	<b>Natural–spiritual</b>	<b>Natural</b>
Demonology	Personification of evil	Personification of evil	Evil is an impersonal spiritual force	Evil is human, not spiritual
Aetiology	Affliction is spiritual	Affliction can have natural and spiritual causes	Affliction is natural, but it sometimes has a spiritual core	Affliction has natural causes
Diagnostics	Discernment of evil spirits	Discernment of affliction type: natural or spiritual	Discernment of natural causes, including medical diagnosis	Discernment of natural causes, including medical diagnosis
Tropes	No conscious use of tropes; tropes are taken literally; metonyms	Both unconscious and conscious use of tropes; metonyms	Conscious use of tropes; metonyms and metaphors	Metaphors, or no tropes at all
Ritual/action	Exorcism	Exorcism and other forms of spiritual healing; non-religious healing	Non-religious healing, sometimes exorcism or other forms of spiritual healing	Non-religious healing

- A *ritual* criterion: Does exorcism take place? Against whom? Is ritual accompanied by scientific treatment?

The first three criteria are of an emic nature, the fourth is much more etic, and the last one is of a mixed emic and etic character. These four types and their characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

As we will now show, the New Life Charismatics can be found mainly in the spiritual–natural type (the majority) and the natural–spiritual type (a minority), with indirect influence from the spiritual type, whereas the Spiritists of the Casa do Jardim are less interested in domestication and belong primarily to the spiritual and the spiritual–natural types, with a tendency to reformulate the natural type.

The *spiritual type* is the least domesticated. In the groups we researched, this type probably does not exist in its extreme form, but traces of this way of thinking and performing can be found in the Charismatic and Spiritist world. Thus early Pentecostal healing was anti-psychological and had an ambivalent attitude toward medical healing. Physical and mental illnesses were seen as the direct influence of Satan. There was no clear distinction between illness and demonic oppression, and in deliverance demons were believed to manifest themselves

through vomiting and convulsions, or sometimes even appearing in a material form. The Spiritists of the Casa do Jardim, although some were professionally involved in academic medical activity, sometimes tended to adopt a purely Spiritist mono-causal discourse. At least in those cases where academic medical treatment had not led to a solution, affliction was seen as caused spiritually, and doctors referred their patients to the Casa do Jardim.

The *spiritual-natural type* shows signs of domestication in that, besides spiritual diagnosis and healing, natural causes are admitted in discourse and that non-religious treatment is recommended in certain cases. The majority of Charismatic Christians can be classified in this type. They have very vivid images of the spiritual realms. The reality of spiritual evil has to be dealt with in the spiritual, for 'you can't cast out a spirit through medication'. Evil is personified and demons are addressed as persons, although not all spiritual-natural healers think that the naming of demons is necessary for a successful deliverance. Through the gift of discernment and through prayer, they carefully distinguish between physical, emotional and demonic affliction. Charismatic healers of the spiritual-natural type also make use of secular means of 'discernment', and some seek to integrate secular psychology into their healing practices. This pragmatic and improvised way of dealing with spiritual and natural causes is perhaps best described as playing with psychology. The performance of deliverance is more diverse than in the spiritual type; deliverance sessions of the second type can be dramatic but also very peaceful.

Dr Lacerda's Spiritists can be located in the spiritual-natural type to the degree that certain forms of affliction were not admitted to treatment in the sessions of the Casa do Jardim. People were sometimes refused because 'radar' did not detect a spiritual obsessor. In some cases the patient's description of his or her problem was sufficient reason to refer him or her to academic medical treatment, or simply to the chemist's type of medicine. In contrast to the Charismatic Christians' attitude, there was some reluctance to refer people to psychotherapy, because in those cases the problem seemed more serious and the spiritual cause was considered too obvious. There was a strong criticism of psychotherapy for denying spiritual causes.

The *natural-spiritual type* is more domesticated because depersonification comes in as a new ingredient. Charismatics of the third type form a minority, and the Spiritists of the Casa do Jardim do not adopt the views mentioned here. The minority Charismatic Christians of this third type believe in 'external negative forces', but refuse to make any ontological statements about evil. Demons are seen as metaphors, but not in a reductionist way. Transpersonal evil is often dealt with in psychological terms. Demonic problems are identified as 'autonomous' and 'objectified' sinful patterns and repressed feelings, sometimes compared with viruses: impersonal but destructive (see Parmentier 1997; Sonnenschein 1989, 25; Walker 1995). This approach is mainly found in the Charismatic renewal movement.

The *natural type* is of course the most domesticated type of spiritual healing practices. The boundary between this type and the preceding one is not very precise. As far as Charismatics are concerned, performing exorcism as a placebo, as they do, is very close to disbelief in evil entities. It is difficult to say whether there

are any Charismatic Christians who deny the existence of transpersonal evil, but some Dutch Charismatic theologians seem to speak about the demonic without believing in its reality (Suurmond 1990). Domestication in the Charismatic sense often serves as a sign of professionalization, creating distinction between different Charismatic healing ministries. It is, however, not a one-way direction; processes of de-domestication of exorcism continue to emerge, and certainly not only among the middle classes.<sup>5</sup> With regard to Spiritists the paradox is that, though the majority can be situated in the first two types, depending on the nature of the affliction's cause, they themselves tend to view Spiritism as a science. Yet, they include the spiritual dimension into scientific discourse and propose a revolutionary paradigm shift. The merger they propose between religious and scientific discourse would most probably cause them to consider our typology as invalid, because to them the science of the natural type is outmoded and will prove useless in the twenty-first century. In fact, they refuse domestication.

### Conclusion

In this short comparative study we have shown that belief in demons and the practice of exorcism shows a great variety. What is interesting in our examples is that both Spiritists and Charismatics have knowledge, sometimes even expert knowledge, of psychological and medical discourses, but that this knowledge is not necessarily opposed to more spiritual illness discourses. Rather, discourses are translated, transformed and commented upon, to fit their respective worldviews and practices. Our typology shows a wide variety of attitudes and practices toward the perceived reality of supernatural evil. It also shows a major difference between two seemingly similar belief systems with regard to exorcist practice. The Spiritists in our example show little variation across the suggested typology, whereas Charismatic exorcist practice can be identified by at least three of the types. Crucial in the case of the Spiritists is a certain view of science being enlightened by spiritual knowledge, a fusion of science and religion that resists domestication. Spiritists reinterpret the scientific worldview and incorporate this reinterpreted version into their repertoire of healing. Charismatics, despite the more extreme positions they may occupy according to the typology, seem more vulnerable to secular domestication of healing practices. However, this does not seem to make them any less spiritual; it rather shows the creative vitality of this religious movement to combine several approaches to illness and healing. Given the ambiguous nature of religious language, this fact should not surprise us.

### NOTES

1. By the distinction supernatural vs natural or spiritual vs natural, we mean religious repertoires vs secular repertoires of healing.
2. In this section we have not used real names.



3. On the second New Life study day that he visited, Versteeg was invited to pray for a client. This shows the relatively open nature of this group, since they knew very little of Versteeg's background.
4. 'Impure' sexual activities include extra-marital sexual relations, homosexuality and masturbation.
5. Similarly, positive religious experiences in Pentecostalism continue to swing between domestication and dedomestication, as can be observed in the recent Toronto Blessing, a renewal movement that is characterized by unusual ecstatic experiences.

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